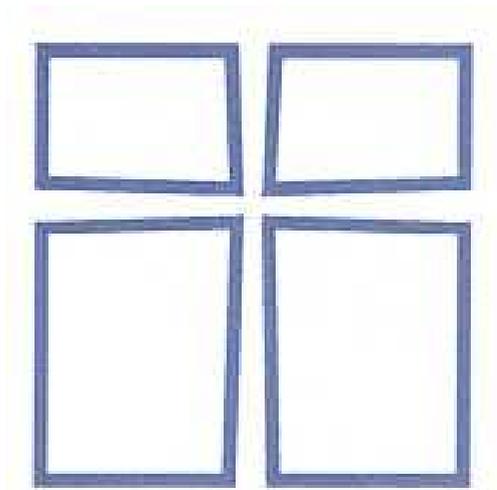

Theodosia



Quarterly
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of the Holy Cross
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Contents

Theodosia 2018, 4

Picture	4	80 Years Ago	29
Editorial Sr. Christiane Jungo	5	The Funeral Theodosia, Volume 53, No. 3, July 1938, Pg. 159	
Spiritual Places Talk by Prof. Dr. Thomas Dienberg OFM Cap, Münster/Westphalia, Germany Provincial Superiors' Congress 2018 in Ingenbohl	6	As Baptized also Sent Josef Stübi, Parish priest, Baden Switzerland, homily from the Pilgrims' Mass in Ingenbohl on 16 th October, 2018	31
80 Years Ago The Exhumation of the Mortal Remains of Mother M. Theresa Commemorative volume on the 50 th Death Anniversary of the Servant of God Mother M. Theresa Scherer Theodosia, Volume 53, No. 3, July 1938, Pg. 130 -144	19	A Spiritual Place – the Crypt of Mother M. Theresa Sr. Christiane Jungo, Ingenbohl	34
80 Years Ago The Transfer of the Remains of the Servant of God Theodosia, Volume 53, No. 3, July 1938, Pg. 145-147	26	Information from the General Leadership	37
		Christmas Greetings from the Mother House in Pictures Statues of Chirstmas crib by Sr. Clarella Schäfler, Ingenbohl	39



Spiritual place: Cross in front of crypt

Editorial

"Vision 2020" directs our thoughts and eyes to "Spiritual Places". Places that are real, and in the figurative sense! Since much is offered now under the concept of "Spirituality", the General Leadership has sought expert help to gain a deeper understanding of it during the Provincial Congress 2018. Prof. Dr. Thomas Dienberg OFM Cap is Director at the Competence Centre for Christian Spirituality in Münster, Westphalia. He has given permission to "Theodosia" to publish his talks at the Provincial Congress 2018, so that all sisters can access his reflections (talk 1 in this issue, talk 2 in "Theodosia" 1, 2019).

His thoughts primarily address the question: What is spirituality? Then he introduces us to the perceptions and experiences of different people on "Spiritual Places". Moving on to "Community as Spiritual Place", he concretizes his thoughts for our everyday life. The pictures now inserted in the text are not from his original text. They are to be understood as representative.

When Mother M. Theresa died in 1888 and was laid to rest in the Sisters' cemetery, people soon started pilgrimages to this "holy place". In 1938, her remains were exhumed and transferred to its present resting place. The whole procedure and the associated ceremonies were described at length in the "Commemorative Volume for the 50th Death Anniversary of the Servant of God Mother M. Theresa Scherer". 80 years later, we reprint three contributions from that time and also add some of the black and white photographs: "The Exhumation of the Remains of Mother M. Theresa", "The Transfer of the Remains of the Servant of God" and "The Funeral".

In the Pilgrim's Mass in Ingenbohl, every celebrant priest attempts to open a new access to Mother M. Theresa. Pastor Josef Stübi, from Baden Switzerland, summarized it on 16th October: "We too are - as she was - as Baptized also Called. We too are - as she was - as Baptized also Sent!"

The experiences of Sr. Christiane Jungo conclude the texts in connection with Mother M. Theresa: "A Spiritual Place - the Crypt of Mother M. Theresa."

As an exception, this volume is not concluded with the usual "Information from the General Leadership", but with a "Christmas Greetings from the Motherhouse in Pictures".

Sr. Christiane Jungo

Spiritual Places

Prof. Fr. Dr. Thomas Dienberg OFM Cap, Münster Germany

Fr. Thomas Dienberg has been working as a Capuchin in Münster for more than 25 years. From 2002 - 2014 he was Rector of the Philosophical -Theological University Münster. Since 2016 he is the Director of JUNCTUS - Center of Competence for Christian Spirituality in Münster. Fr. Thomas gave two keynote speeches on our Vision 2020 at the Provincial Superiors' Congress in Ingenbohl from 18th to 28th September, 2018. The text of the first presentation is reproduced below. The 2nd presentation will be included in Theodosia 1, 2019.

Dear Sisters!

What are spiritual places? What distinguishes them? What is necessary? And what is to be avoided?

Are your communities spiritual places? If so, why? If not, what is missing?

You want to ask yourself these questions today. These are the questions I want to explore a little in my presentation. They are, I would like to say right at the beginning, not simple questions, because they touch the substance of spiritual life. They penetrate the roots of your religious life. Behind them are the basic questions: What do we stand for, what is our vocation - and how can we live it today in the face of radical and ongoing changes in the church and in the society? And in the face of globalization, individualization and pluralization that are affecting all continents, not only in Western Europe and the Anglo-American



Sr. Marija Brizar, Mother General and speaker Fr. Thomas Dienberg OFM Cap

region, these questions arise worldwide.

I would like to approach the topic today in three steps and introduce it to you. First of all, I find it important to clarify the concept of spirituality very briefly. Do we all actually start from the same concept? What do the people understand of whom many today claim that they have a longing for spirituality, but not for religion or institutional religion - what do people outside our ranks understand by spirituality?

A second step then deals with the question of what a spiritual place

is or what makes a place a spiritual place.

Finally, I would like to end the presentation with the aspect that everything comes down to: What does a religious community mean as a spiritual place?

1. What is spirituality?

There are many definitions for spirituality, one of which I would like to pick out. It originated in a non-religious context and stands for a group of scientists and practitioners who have set themselves the goal of bringing spirituality more into everyday social life and at the same time reflecting on it scientifically.

The European SPES Institute, an international network of individuals and organizations dedicated to promoting spirituality in economy and society, defines spirituality as follows: "Spirituality is people's multiform search for meaning interconnecting them with all living beings and to God or Ultimate Reality. Within this definition there is room for differing views, for spiritualities with and without God and for an ethics of dialogue."

Is that what you understand by spirituality? It is a broad definition that allows and keeps open many things. I find some aspects very important, because they correspond to what is understood by spirituality in the narrower religious and then in the Christian sense.

First: Spirituality has something to do with an **individual and personal search** for meaning. The definition leaves it open, whether it is a religious search for meaning, the experience of a transcendent reality or a purely ethically inspired search. But it is about meaning, something that carries life, enriches it and gives it a perspective.

A second important aspect of this definition:

It is based on the assumption that this individual search for meaning has to do with **relationship**, namely relationship with everything that lives and exists. So it's not about perfecting one's life, it's not just about the individual. It's about building relationships. The other in his otherness, the other, nature, everything that is, is included in spirituality, thus not primarily intended as self-experience -

rather the experience of myself in the context of the world and the other. So such an approach to spirituality embraces the world with all that is, whether it is alien to me or not. It connects me to the world, to the other, to myself and to God.



Representative image

From its very origins the word spirituality is a **Christian term**. In a nutshell: For the first time the word appears in the Pauline Scriptures in the NT. Here the apostle uses the word 'pneumatikos' (spirit-directed). This is translated as 'spiritualiter' in Latin. The word stands for Christian existence. Everyone who is a Christian is described by Paul as 'spirit-directed' (1 Cor 2:14-3:3). They lead a life based not on matter and flesh (Greek 'sarx'), but on the Spirit. Christians should not cling to the world and materialism, but are shaped by

the Spirit, by the Spirit of God. This includes an awareness of a world behind the world and of a perspective beyond that world. 'Spiritualiter' is thus a technical term for Christian existence.

Dutch theologian Kees Waaijman speaks of **transformation** as the core word of spirituality. This is also a very important aspect which we have also included in the definition of our institute IUNCTUS in Münster.

Transformation can be translated as **change, reform**. Applied to the reality of spirituality, this means that spirituality has to do with experiences, and not only with experiences that are superficial and quickly forgotten. In spirituality, experiences play a role that can change life and lead to a deep transformation. It is not just a matter of changing a habit, a ritual or a form, but of changing one's life. Such a transformation can be active or can happen, i.e. the individual actively approaches it based on a deep touch or experience, or it happens to him/her - and the person becomes 'from Saul to Paul'. After touching and experiencing a reality behind

all reality, life changes. In the active or passive transformation there are also two realities of the Christian history of spirituality (yes, every religion): asceticism, conscious practice, and mysticism: the "experience", I would like to call it that. Like Francis, Gautama Siddhartha, Mahatma Gandhi and many other figures, Paul's life was radically changed and he found his forms and expressions to integrate this experience of being divinely met into his life.

Another important word for spirituality is mentioned here: **Form**. Spirituality is not formless, not so today and different tomorrow. Spirituality also expresses itself in forms, which should, however, always be reflected upon: Do the forms still correspond to spirituality, are they still alive or just dead rituals? Then they have to be changed, transformed, so that they can affect and touch other people.

Let me sum up:
Spirituality is **never just a part of a person's life**. It is not just an experience in a ritual, once a day or on certain and special

occasions. Spirituality includes attitudes, rituals and forms. It is holistic and determines the values of the individual. Spirituality is a way of life and a lifestyle based on a connection and relationship with everything that lives. Spirituality can also be translated as 'basic inspiration'. This is the one reality that determines my life. It is therefore irreplaceable in life. This source of life has to be nourished and lived from.

Spirituality is a **dynamic process** that gives meaning to life and reflects the decisions made and connects them with the meaningful dimension of life. Or in other words: Spirituality answers the question: What kind of spiritual child are you?

I append to you the definition of our institute IUNCTUS, which has taken up these different aspects of spirituality.

Here is the definition: Definition of IUNCTUS / Münster: "**Christian spirituality** is a continual change (*transformatio*) of a person who responds to the call of incarnate God, Jesus Christ. This transformation is realized in committed and responsible relationships with the world, with fellow human beings and with oneself."

2. What is a 'spiritual place'?

If I may again name the criteria that I have set for spirituality in the first step:

- Connection and relationship with everything that lives and is created
- relationship formation
- Transformation, transition towards change
- Practice and experience
- Forms, rituals, attitudes
- contact with God



Representative image

Spiritual places, in my opinion, should reflect these aspects of spirituality. What does it mean? How does it work?

I would first like to make a few personal comments on these issues, but they already point us in a clear direction.

When I decided to go into a sabbatical year after the twelve years as rector of our university in Münster, the idea of pursuing the question of spiritual places, which has always played a role in my travels, emerged more and more. What actually makes a place a spiritual place? What do people find there - and what does 'spiritual place' actually mean to me? Is it the traditional place of pilgrimage, such as the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, which has become so popular in recent years? What moves people when they set off? What do such places look like in other religions? Are spiritual places just 'places', or can they be something completely different? What does the modern place of pilgrimage look like - the 'Apple flagship' in New York, where more people romp about during the day than at many religious places of pilgrimage in the world?

And I went on my way, visited many countries and looked at so-called spiritual places, but always asked myself whether such a place tells me something, whether it touches me - even if I have another religion? For are not the antennas for the religious and the

spiritual similar in all, even if we differ in form and content? Isn't it the basic longing for a 'being carried', for a foundation of meaning and interpretation of life?



Representative image

I have also been a little on the trail of the exotic. For example, I wasn't in the spiritual place of my homeland, Kevelaer. As a teenager I went there for the first time with a bicycle pilgrimage. It fascinated me, not so much the place of pilgrimage as such, but the community on the way, the pilgrimage with the others. Another important place for many is missing: Altötting - not a place with which I associate much of personally 'being touched', but a pilgrimage that is very important for our Capuchin Province in Germany; historically significant, the largest Marian shrine in Germany. For many people these

two places of pilgrimage are important. But they say very little to me. They belong to my history, but only a part of it. There were also explicit places of pilgrimage in the places I visited, but not very many, and if they were, they were places and pilgrimages of other religions. Spiritual places for me are not only places of pilgrimage and those that bear the label 'spiritual'. The question also arises as to whether places of pilgrimage are spiritual places per se (of their own accord). Or do they not first become spiritual places because people seek and find something there, a reference to reality behind reality, to the divine?

I have found for myself spiritual places where perhaps no one really expects them, in lonely and enchanted places, in cemeteries, in chapels, which may not be really suitable for a pilgrimage. But they are my places or better, they have become my places.

So are spiritual places individual?

Are there no clear criteria?

How would it be if I asked here and now, at this moment, what spiritual place do you have that you are gathered here in room?

Do you have one, if so, why?

What do you think all this would show?

I asked these questions to about 30 people from my personal circle, asking them to be brief. The answers are tremendously varied, especially since I have not given a fixed term or definition of spirituality.

However, almost without exception I asked people who were and are socialized Christians.

What are the answers? In the following I will read some examples to you:

A married couple, both 50 years old, former altar servers of our monastery church in Münster write the following:

"Our spiritual place is our kitchen table. A square wooden plate, a bench, a few chairs and a lamp. Here conversations take place, here one cries, laughs, discusses and argues. At our kitchen table you sit alone and read the newspaper, and we eat there with family or friends. At our table there are family reunions where people talk about "God and the world".

At our table, the past is reported, and decisions are made for the future.

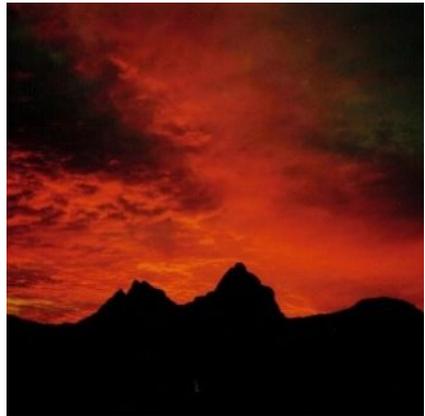
For us, this table is a very special place, a spiritual place."

In the meantime they have renovated their kitchen - the table remains the same!

Or:

A good friend, 54 years old:

"For me, a spiritual place is a place where I feel comfortable, where I feel the freshness of nature, where the sun pierces my skin and where the presence of other people gives me strength for everyday life. I have such a place: the balcony at home that leads out onto the street. Here I meet precious people, exchange ideas with them and enjoy the delicacies that creation has prepared for us. Here I realize that God means so good to me."



Representative image

Or:

"It is a place for pausing and looking up. The perception of being closer to God than anywhere else. A place, the beauty that can be made by

nature as well as by human hands. However, any kind of natural beauty is not such a place for me. I do not have a natural place, but the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, with the paintings of Giotto and Cimabue, creates the effect of being touched, of pausing and of looking up every time I am there.

The Basilica of Francis in Assisi is a historical and religious place that lives from the images of Giotto. Both the atmosphere and the message and beauty of the images (The Life of Francis) are for me of a strength that is always tangible.”

Or:

"A spiritual place is for me: a filling station for the soul.

Do you have one?

Not just one.

Which one, why?

The fuel for my soul is manifold. My most important spiritual place is under the helmet of the motorcycle. It only becomes spiritual when I am alone on the road. Then I am really alone, can scream, pray, be silent, laugh, sing.... and the world rushes by, accompanied by the sound of wind and engines. Much becomes relative while driving and the landscape meditative. The weather doesn't matter,

sometimes cold, fog or rain, then the experience often becomes even more intense. The area doesn't really matter, but not much traffic or a city that demands a lot of attention. When then new unknown ways convey surprising glances every now and then, it is ingenious. Also with pleasure stop the engine and listen. The spiritual place here is the saddle and the helmet, not the area you drive through or the destination.

Without a moped on some days alternative fuel sources are quiet places, like churches in a hectically noisy big city, which I visit spontaneously or as planned. Glad for a Holy Mass as well. Alternatively these are also sometimes cemeteries, parks or zoos. I have to be alone and have no sightseeing, stop often and look at few things but intensively.”

Or:

"There are places I would retrospectively call spiritual if they provided the framework for mostly unexpected experiences of depth, for an experience of something that relativizes and transcends everyday life. This can be a simple Romanesque chapel, a barren rock landscape or simply a room with a view of the countryside. It does not need much; important is that the place

offers little distraction. I like places where thoughts seemingly wander aimlessly and yet concentrate and reflect.

For me, the place of spiritual experience par excellence is the encounter with people. In this sense, spiritual places, places where people can approach each other, people who look beyond their own horizons, people who are open and open-minded, attentive, curious about God and the world."

And a final statement:

An artist, 36 years old:

"A spiritual place is a space of concentration for me. First and foremost, an imaginary space of concentration, which I lead with myself and must give to myself. Concentration, but also in the physical sense. Places where people gather to practice attentiveness towards themselves and their environment. Places where people recognize themselves.

Personally, my meditation cushion is enough to bring an imaginary space into harmony with the physical.

It is due to my life as a travelling photographer that I cannot tie

myself to a solid spiritual place. So I have to take it with me. I also prefer to look at spiritual places detached from institution. While travelling, it can be very different places that help me to let go. In nature (sea, mountains), it is easier to relate myself to the world. It can also be a small tree house in India. The "where" plays only a small role. It can be supportive, the How and Why is much more important to me."

These statements make it clear that spirituality is a very amazing term, even for those who are socialized Catholic (I must confess, the last statement was from a Buddhist friend, a native Vietnamese). The term says a lot. This is reflected in the choice and names of the different spiritual places. Here are the most striking terms that have been used in connection with the spiritual place:

- Relationship and Relationship Formation
- Communication and conversation
- Encounter with people
- Deep experience
- Nature
- Peace and quietness
- Concentration
- To be alone

We search for and find places that show and offer these dimensions.



Praying in crypt

3. Community as spiritual place

I would like to pick out three things for a spiritual place, which then also form the beginning for the third point of my remarks. There are three points that I have noticed and have become important in my search for spiritual places and during my journey to such places:

The first is what constitutes the centre of spirituality, especially the centre of Franciscan spirituality: **"being connected"** - **being deeply connected** to me, to the other, to life, to creation, to God! The answers show this: a connectedness in the fullness of what life means. In the answers there is again and again talk about encounters and the importance of

encounters with other people. I have been able to make this experience again and again on my journeys - and have been enriched infinitely by it. A deep connection with people and their holy places, even if I did not speak the language, even if some things alienated me - but the smiles of others, some spoken and unspoken words created encounter and touch.

A spiritual place is therefore a place where encounter is possible and a place where encounter occurs: the encounter with oneself, with others, with the world and nature - and God.

The second point is **"perception"**. To receive with all senses, to perceive and to look. Do not judge, rule out and evaluate, no, look, perceive, trace and be open. Spiritual places invite exactly that; and then they can be places of former destruction that have become places of peace and of man's deep longing for peace; they can be places of longing, graves, cemeteries, monuments that remind us of people who have kept alive the longing for life and love in man; they can be chapels or churches, temples or other

religious places that invite us to pause and decelerate life, that let man perceive and come to his own reason; it can be nature in all its beauty, created, in all its unfamiliarity and violence; it can also be places of normal everyday life, where encounters take place - and encounters can only succeed if people respect each other, listen to each other, perceive and see the other as he or she is, not who he or she should be or who is stuck in a drawer and cannot and must not come out of it. That is the essence of contemplation, an unbiased perception and letting oneself be touched and deeply connected with reality within - and that can happen everywhere.

A spiritual place therefore invites to contemplation, to an unbiased looking, to an inward looking. It is a place of deceleration that allows people to introspect themselves.

The third point I would like to describe is "**responsibility**". The search for spiritual places has not only touched me emotionally, it has also shown me above all that I and we all have a responsibility for ensuring that people can continue to search for and find

their spiritual place in the future. A spirituality that finds the sunset by the sea so beautiful must not stand still. Rather, it demands, on the basis of touch and encounter, on the basis of perception and being connected, to perceive the responsibility for this creation and also to live it. A place like Hiroshima is not only a memorial. It challenges me to live the peace where I am. A cemetery is not only the memory of the dead, it is also a call to live life and make it possible for others to live. And not closing my eyes to death, but by perceiving that I am mortal, to offer and give my support to the other on the way to death.



Representative image

A spiritual place connects the special experience with everyday life, it takes in the misery and the hardships of the world - and invites to take responsibility and to live.

What does it mean to think of your communities as spiritual places? In the light of what has been said, I would like to mention just a few more key words, so to say as basis for reflection on your communities as spiritual places.

Elements that distinguish a community as a spiritual place:

- It is a community that lives together out of a certain spirit, that has an identity and that is **at home in a school of spirituality**: the Franciscan Spirituality.
- It is a **prayerful community** that cultivates a lively prayer and invites others to prayer.
- It is a **community that can allow silence and tranquillity** in order to make the longing take place or be felt. They are communities that can endure silence and that can invite to silence.
- It is a **community that can let**

go - it has something to do with tolerance and allowing diversity. It is a community in which people talk to each other and not about each other.

- It is a **community of people who seek together** and remain in search, inviting others to seek.
- It is a **community of people who are open to enquiries**.
- It is a **community of people who put their community to the test** and challenge it, who think along, sometimes even think outside the box, because spirituality does not mean harmony on all levels. Spirituality often disturbs harmony - and is prone to disruption.
- It is a **community that takes the world with it into the community**, into prayer and into action thus taking responsibility and offering its helping hands.
- It is a **community that gives home and refuge to other people**.
- And finally: communities as spiritual places are "**other places**".

Finally, the three points I noticed in the course of my search for spiritual places:

*A community of the Ingenbohl Sisters is a spiritual place, a place where encounter is possible and a **place where encounter** takes place: the encounter with oneself and others, with the world and nature - and God.*

*A community of the Ingenbohl Sisters is a spiritual place, a **place that** invites us to **contemplate**, to*

look without prejudice, to look within.

*It is a **place of deceleration** that allows people to find their way back to themselves.*

*A community of the Ingenbohl Sisters is a spiritual place, a **place that connects the special experience with everyday life**. The community takes the misery and the hardships of the world into its life - and invites to **take responsibility and to live**.*

80 Years Ago

The Exhumation of the Mortal Remains of Mother M. Theresa

Commemorative volume on the 50th Death Anniversary of the Servant of God Mother M. Theresa Scherer

Theodosia, Volume 53, No. 3, July 1938, Pg. 130 -144

Mother M. Theresa died 130 years ago and was buried in the sisters' cemetery, in the vestibule of the cemetery chapel. Her mortal remains were exhumed 80 years ago. The then "Theodosia" described the process in great detail. The text is reproduced here verbatim. The black and white photographs also date from 1938.

A rainy day. Over the Mythen slowly moved the fog strips. – That was the climatic condition on that 30th of May, which for weeks and months had been the focus of our preparation: the day of exhuming the mortal remains of our beloved Mother, of the Servant of God Maria Theresa.

The evening before, the most Reverend Bishop of Chur, His Excellency, Dr. Laurentius Matthias, accompanied by the Vicar General, Msgr. Caminada, arrived at the Motherhouse.

On the morning of 30th May, before going to the cemetery, His Excellency swore in the two doctors, Dr. Eberle and Dr. Koller, the anatomists, and the workers who were to open the grave. Two eyewitnesses of the first funeral, our dear sister Luka Strahl and a nephew of the dear deceased took the oath about the identity of the grave.



First grave of Mother M. Theresa from 1888 to 1938 in the hall of the cemetery chapel

The fine rain still fell, and no ray of sunshine gave the meaningful day its golden light; but those who made the pilgrimage to the tomb that morning at 9 o'clock hardly saw the large rain pearls hung on all the twigs. The cemetery lay

silently on top of the hill waiting for the big event. The grave of the beloved Mother, on which so many had laid their sufferings and burdens in the course of 50 years, bore its last ornament, a large sheaf of carnations and roses. Around this grave, in this hour, the sisters of all countries and zones gathered in spirit. A "Domine non sum dignus" (Lord I am not worthy), came from the lips of those who, out of thousands, were fortunate enough to see the precious remains of the Servant of God.



From right to left: Mother General M. Agnes Schenk, Mother General M. Diomira, former Mother General M. Aniceta Regli

At half past nine, Mother General, the Most Reverend Bishop, the clergy, and the sworn witnesses arrived at the cemetery. The nephew of Mother Mary Theresa was asked by His Excellency to identify the grave in which the servant of God had been placed. Our dear Mother M. Aniceta, was also asked about the authenticity of the tomb.

The notary of the Causa, Reverend Prof. Dr. Lutz, then solemnly read the passage from the ecclesiastical code of law: "*Your Excellency, the Most Reverend Lord Bishop of Chur, the Holy Apostolic See, announces that under the penalty of excommunication, of which only the Holy Father himself can give absolution, affecting all those, of whatever rank, dignity and place they may be, who, though with pious intent, would take away from the bones of the servant of God Maria Theresa Scherer, as they are found in this tomb, or add to them in the new coffin.*"

Thou great, Holy Mother Church, how you enfold your children with the protection of your wise laws, and how you honour those who walked the path of the elect!

The sworn workers now approached the tomb. They had trouble rolling away the heavy stone. At last the marble slab rises



Episcopal witnesses of the opening of the grave

and a cement ceiling becomes visible, on which the pickaxe now deals massive blows. We followed every movement of the workers with almost anxious concern.

The upper cement cover was barely removed when the pickaxe hit iron. Two massive iron rails, on which the heavy marble slab rested, had to be exposed and lifted out with iron bars. (Our eyes

kept looking for the Mother who was lying there under the entire heavy load...) Gradually the spade came upon loose earth - the consecrated earth, which had absorbed what was decomposable about the servant of God.

It was 11 o'clock when a piece was lifted out from the coffin. The decayed wood of a simple fir coffin, the house of poverty, which is the last resting place of every Holy Cross sister. A handful of brown mouldy dirt, which filled the pillow on which the Mother was laid to sleep. The Causa's notary recorded all these decayed treasures before they were carefully collected. - For a time, it seemed as if decay had done all the work, there was no trace of human bones.

Now the anatomist went to the grave. After careful searching, he stretches something upwards: The skull! He lays it on the rim of the grave, and everyone bends over this shattering form chiselled by death. "Memento homo"! - So this was the head of the Mother, the royal wife, whose brilliant spirit, according to the report of her contemporaries, went far beyond the average. We looked at it with trembling nervousness.



Mr. Strasser, the anatomist uncovers the skull.

Shortly afterwards the black ribbon of the little sister's cross was found. It was wrapped around the cervical vertebrae, supple and without any trace of decomposition of the tissue. The loop was still carrying a particle of the ringlet on which the cross was hanging. The ribbon is tied backwards, as was customary at that time. The knot at the front was tightly tied.

Meanwhile, the anatomist continued the search for the bones in the dry earth, which did not exude the slightest of musty smell. The two doctors verified the individual bones that were taken from the grave. Prof. Dr. Lutz recorded.

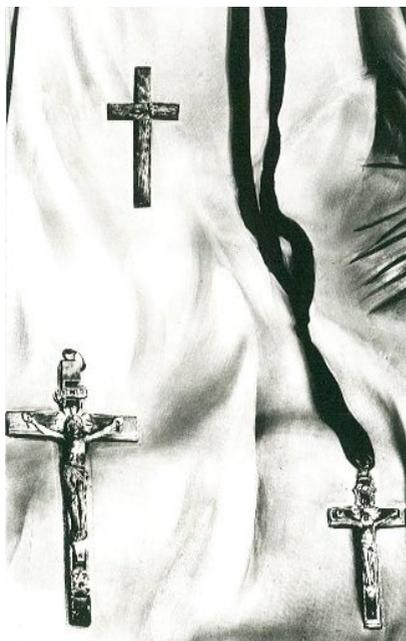
Around 1.35, the anatomist handed out a cross from the grave, a simple death cross made of nickel with a wooden inlay and the body. The history of the institute mentions this cross, which Mother Maria Theresa received during her last trip to Rome in January 1888. She clasped it in her last moments and held it close to her lips - this cross lay in her cold hands when the dead Mother was carried into the Franciscan chapel for laying out. It was taken unharmed from the tomb. Only a thin layer of verdigris covered the corpus and the inscription.

Two minutes later, the little sister's cross that Mother Maria Theresa carried in her coffin was found. The small cross is completely intact; corpus and inscription are clearly visible.

We held the little cross of the Mother in our hands in deep emotion and touched it with ours, when a third little cross, the wooden cross of the rosary, was taken from the grave. It is a small, inconspicuous little wooden cross

without a metal frame. The wood has remained fresh brown and smooth.

This triple "discovery of the crosses" filled us with a holy quiver. Did Providence not want to mark the Servant of God, who wore the glorious sign of the Congregation with such fortitude, as a true Sister of Mercy of the Holy Cross? Didn't this holy mark of our great deceased cast a new light on their work and suffering? Weren't these three crosses the answer of God, the sign that God wanted to give us? And did not



Three intact crosses

the Mother say again to her daughters, leaving them the Cross as their only legacy: "Let us have courage and be strong! – The way of the cross is the only sure way to heaven! - She wore it with all the fidelity of her strong soul, so you also become recipient of the reward of the cross and its victory. At 2 o'clock we left the cemetery. The remains taken from the grave were carried to the cemetery chapel and the gate was sealed.

That same evening, Mr. Strasser, conservator at the Anatomical Institute in Basel, reconstructed the bones into a skeleton. He repeatedly made the statement: "What must this woman have suffered! Severe arthritis had left its traces on the bones. And yet Mother Maria Theresa never seems to have made a mention of it. The only thing known to her closest circle was liver disease, but no letter, no record, reveals the great pains that penetrated into the bones, and which, according to the anatomist, made standing, sitting, lying down a painful experience.

In the following days the bones were organized and set. The anatomist did the same work in the past year on Blessed Nicholas of Flüe. He treated the "holy sister", as he always respectfully called our dear Mother Maria

Theresa, with the greatest care, even reverence, changing the linen again and again, which the dear Mother General gave him, so that they would be touched by the bones. The skeleton, which was almost completely restored, was fixed to a metal sheet covered with Honan silk. The head lies on a small pillow embroidered with gold.

The small span of time between that May 30th and the day of the funeral (June 21st) was filled with the final preparations. The whole hill wanted to be in ceremonial dress. The Franciscan Chapel, which was to house the Mother's grave from then on, received its last ornament. Already on the front side of the small porch stood the inscription that left the passer-by silent: Tomb of the Servant of God Maria Theresa Scherer ... Servant of God? So will we be allowed here to lament our plight to a heavenly intercessor? – and will God give a hearing to his servant? There are still people in Ingenbohl and Brunnen who knew Mother Maria Theresa, who remember praying at the coffin where the first Mother of Ingenbohl lay amidst roses. At that time it had not been thought that after 50 years a tomb would be built in the same place for the Servant of God, but already then many people touched their rosary

on these hands, which had stretched out in so much blessing, and alleviated so much suffering.

And now the daily newspapers reported about this great woman, first Mother of Ingenbohl, and announced the event which was under preparation in these days. – What a miracle that despite no efforts on the part of the convent, or sisters, for getting the Mother beatified, the funeral turned into a feast to be remembered and would lead to her beatification. Sick people came and asked for the favour of touching the bones of the Servant of God, and the petitions for relics came. It was not always easy to shatter all the hopes of those suffering. They could not understand why so much care was being taken to suppress any expression of worship of these precious remains.

So it was June 21, the day on which the Mother was to be laid to rest again. This day in the history of the Congregation will have no equal, and those who witnessed it will keep the memory of it sacred like a grace.

The Most Reverend Bishop His Excellency Dr. Laurentius Matthias Vincent had already arrived the previous evening to make the final preparations

mandated by the Church for the interment of the bones. In view of these venerable bones, the notary of the Causa read the minutes, as well as the document written on parchment about the exhumation, the findings, and the interment to follow, His Excellency and the witnesses present. The document was then signed by the Most Reverend Bishop, the members of the Spiritual Court, the Reverend Mother (Mother Agnes), the two other dear Mothers, Mother M. Aniceta and Mother Theresa, and the General Councillors, sealed in a metal capsule with the Episcopal seal and attached to the metal plate at the head of the skeleton.

The coffin parts, and small bone finds were deposited in a casket which was also provided with the Episcopal seal. The wooden coffin was then sealed.

The three little crosses that remained intact were embedded on silk in a glass casket. A large red seal lies on the silk cord surrounding the box. Most reverend Mother General may keep this treasure, which the great

deceased left to her daughters as a sacred legacy.

The venerable bones of our beloved Mother still lay in the midst of green and white flowers. For a short moment we were allowed to look at the precious remains and, in loving reverence, take this picture of the Mother in us - then the metal sheet with the precious remains was pushed into the simple coffin. One last greeting, then the coffin was closed and tied with a strong silk cord, as prescribed by the church. The Episcopal seal, which lies heavy on the knot of the silk cord, will tell even later generations that the Holy Church has taken possession of this body. With holy jealousy, the Church will watch over these bones and its word of banishment will strike those who wanted to seize it.

Dusk was already over the hill and the noisy day had ended when the coffin was carried up to the cemetery chapel decorated with palms. The Mother keeping her lonely vigil at the altar, greets all who go there with their pains. The door of the chapel was closed and sealed.

80 Years Ago

The Transfer of the Remains of the Servant of God

Commemorative volume on the 50th Death Anniversary of the Servant of God Mother M. Theresa Scherer
Theodosia, Volume 53, No. 3, July 1938, Pg. 145-147

The history of our Congregation tells us of days that seem to us like the fulfilment of a promise, days that reveal to us that our vocation to the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross is a grace. For we have become aware that God holds his shield over our Congregation, that he wanted to give it a preferential love.

This realization was probably the deepest reason for the joy of that 21 June - the day of the transfer to the new burial site. The feeling may be described as: "Victorious, beautiful and pious". Was it no more than that? Was there not something of that great last word of the Servant of God, that silent rejoicing of the homeland: "Heaven, Heaven"?

The transfer was to take place in simplicity and reverence. No formal invitations, no festive programmes, no external splendour. So it was the wish of

our dear Reverend Mother General. Dear Mother Aniceta prayed to St. Peter that it be a sunny day. But the Divine Providence wanted to dress this day in radiant splendour. The roses had blossomed overnight, and a tall white lily too. The air was full of fragrance and song. The quiet meadows surrounding the path to the cemetery carried dazzling pearl fabrics on their stalks.

On the narrow path the young members of the order stood in long rows. The morning sun silvered over the folds of the net lace veils. The dear sisters waited between the rows of graves on the wide path, our convent singers grouped around the arcade, where the grave of the dear mother Pankratia now appeared to be somewhat lonely.

In front of the sealed gates of the cemetery chapel the "Three Mothers" and the General

Councillors waited for the coming of the Most Reverend Bishop and the priests. Ten lily bearers, pupils of the Theresianum surrounded the sealed door - in the high beeches blackbirds sang an Alleluia song, while the priests' procession slowly wound up the path. The altar boys carried the golden lanterns of All Saints' Day solemnly and with dignity, and small clouds of incense curled up around the young birch branches along the way.

Now His Excellency stands in

front of the chapel, checks the integrity of the seal and breaks it open. Through the open gate, the June sun shines on the coffin. The chapel suddenly becomes bright with all the light coming from outside and the metal cross on the coffin lights up and turns reddish-golden. Incense floods into the interior of the high room and fills it with light clouds. On the coffin, over the palm fronds, lies a mighty sheaf of white roses - 50 half-opened buds that exude their scent.



Procession to the convent church

While His Excellency conducts the liturgical prayers, the male choir of Ingenbohl sings the chorale outside: "In paradisum".

The coffin is lifted by four General Councilors. Below in the valley the bells are rung and the procession slowly starts moving. It took the usual path. Novices flanked the procession up to the tennis court, followed by a trellis of the pupils of Paradies and Theresianum - like a Lily grove...

This homecoming of our Mother was quite simple, but she had something of the majesty of a procession. Singing psalms, our singers went ahead of the coffin ... This walk through the radiant day was itself a hymn - a "Te Deum".

Now the pall-bearers with the venerable remains stepped over the threshold of the Motherhouse church. Weren't the holy angels who guarded this shrine, which she requested for and built, coming towards their Mother? For a moment the Mother's coffin rested on the tomb of the founder; then it was carried to the Franciscan Chapel. Four of the oldest sisters kept guard at the coffin, while the Vice postulator of the Causa, Msgr. Lanfranchi, the Cathedral Provost of Chur, together with his assistant, celebrated the solemn Mass. The

choir sang the Mass, alternating with the "people", in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus by Jäggi- (According to church regulations, a requiem should be held on this occasion. The Corpus Christi Octave, however, did not permit a Requiem. Honourable Mother General had therefore requested our esteemed Cardinal Protector for permission to hold the celebration which requires a Requiem in the Corpus Christi Octave. His Eminence obtained from the Congregation of the Rites direction that the solemn Mass of the octave be sung instead of the requiem at the funeral, an advantage which we greeted with joy.)

The holy sacrifice concluded with the singing of the "Veni Creator", followed by a eulogy by the Dr. Fr. Veit Gadiant, a son of St. Francis, in memory of our beloved Great Mother, which became an inner experience for all who were lucky enough to hear it. Mother Maria Theresa stood with us again - not as the great unapproachable, but as the counsellor, who knew how to master all misery - she walked past our mental eye as the good, exemplary Holy Cross Sister, who walked the path of her vocation in humble but always in strong attitude of her pure soul.

80 Years Ago

The Funeral

Commemorative volume on the 50th Death Anniversary of the Servant of God Mother M. Theresa Scherer
Theodosia, Volume 53, No. 3, July 1938, Pg. 159

And now was the hour when the grain of wheat was to be put back into the earth - so that it would bring forth thousands of blessings.

His Excellency and the priests solemnly move to the funeral chapel. The coffin stands on the marble slab that is to seal the tomb. The choir sang "Liberate me" - and "Requiem aeternam" - but there was no lamentation for the dead in it, there stirred rather the Resurrection Alleluia, which is sung year after year in the Holy Sepulchre Chapel. "Requiem aeternam" (Eternal rest), so the liturgy wants it until the day when the church is allowed to speak "beata es tu"-

The coffin fringed with decorative bells was reverently lowered into the crypt.

The funeral ceremony is over, but now all those who were able to participate in the sacred experience of the morning were

inspired to imitate the "grain of wheat", from which they expected fruit and blessing. All those who had filled the house of God walked past devoutly and in good order - it was an endless crowd. How many petitions and holy promises lay in the last look at this coffin, which now made the mother house doubly enriched.



Grave in the Franciscan Chapel



Grave in crypt since 1975

There was still one requirement to be met: The tomb of the Servant of God had to be sealed with the

seal of the Bishop according to church regulation. His Excellency performed this act himself. Its deepest meaning sunk into us: the Holy Church took possession of this tomb. It will only release the seals when God will speak through the signs that we expect in humility and trust.

The Mother's grave is rarely alone. Dear Mother General has ordered that at certain hours of the day prayers be conducted there for the intentions recommended to the intercession of Mother Maria Theresa.

As if a silent homesickness tugged us, we come to the dear, bright chapel, where the Mother is always waiting for us. Passers-by stop and step in unobtrusively, and with much intimacy and trust place their concern on the white stone slab, where always fresh roses blossom.

As Baptized also Sent

Josef Stübi, Parish priest of Baden, Switzerland

Fr. Stübi had selected the following scriptural texts for the pilgrims' Mass on 16th October, 2018: Reading: 1 Cor 12:31-13:13; Mt 25:31- 40. His sermon is reproduced in full.

Dear Sisters and Brothers

We have heard two texts from the Holy Scriptures. The "Song of Love" by Paul - and a part of the eschatological discourse on the Last Judgment by Jesus, depicted by the evangelist Matthew.

It is with a purpose that these texts are selected for the liturgy of commemorative Mass for *Sr. Maria Theresa Scherer* - here in the convent Ingenbohl at her grave. They depict a field of relationships: on the one hand there is God. On the other hand, there are the people in their need. And then there are also those addressed: In the time of Jesus it was those who were with him, in her time it was *Maria-Theresa*, and today we are being addressed.

The backdrop of this is as it were a network, a network of love. And this network makes us strong - and at the same time humble -in fact in the good sense of the word. Humble, therefore, not in the sense of devout submissiveness. Humility in its old high German meaning, "*courage to serve*". And that is nothing for little minds and

cowards. *Sr. Maria Theresa Scherer* was neither.

In the needs of the time, she recognized for herself and for her work the will of God. And her work, that many Ingenbohl sisters under her inspiration have in the past and continue to do to this day. So, in the needs of the time she recognized the will of God, as Fr. Theodosius used to say: "*The need of the time is the will of God*".

The inspiration and motivation for their work were certainly texts from the Bible, like those we have



Mother M. Theresa, drawing by Sr. M. Agniete Steponaityte, Ingenbohl

just heard, but also the political, economic and social, especially the educational situation of their time. She lived from 1825 - 1888.

Inge Sprenger Viol, the author of the book entitled *"A Life against Misery and Injustice, the Way and Work of Sister Maria Theresa Scherer"*, has concisely summarized her attitude and personality. On the back cover of the book she writes: *"Against the misery and injustice of an entire time she had no more than her own life, and yet: as the first Superior General of the Ingenbohl Sisters, Sister Maria Theresa Scherer founded a work that not only had a lasting influence on social development in Switzerland, but even today serves the welfare of people throughout the world. This book tells the story of the life, achievements and lasting impact of this extraordinary woman. With determination and a wise sense of humour, deeply in touch with the situation of the world, and in silent prayer, she responded to the needs of her time and can be a role model for the present time."*

It was not easy for *Maria Theresa Scherer*. She also suffered. She was confronted by the almost impossible and was expected to make it possible. A selection from the table of contents of this book,

bring home to us the highlights of that struggle:

- *A woman who set out to learn to fear*
- *The too young poor mother*
- *A break is inevitable*
- *An inheritance becomes an oppressive burden*
- *New clouds darken the sky*
- *War in Europe and Kulturkampf (cultural struggle) in Switzerland.*

What Sr. Maria-Theresa Scherer probably never forgot was that she, too, was integrated into this network of love mentioned at the beginning, of which she herself was a part. *"With combative earnestness and wise humour, in solidarity with the world and in silent prayer she responded to the needs of her time..."*

I have read the book and I believe I can say that Sr. Maria Theresa, who also, as it is explicitly said, drew strength "in silent prayer", not only in the youthful enthusiasm of the beginnings, but also when the harshness of the realities caught up with her again and again, intimately connected to the one of whom she knew in her heart that it was he who called her - and it was he who sent her, and it is he who always sends anew. And that the one who calls and sends is also the one who goes with and accompanies. And this

"every day", as it says at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, "*And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age*". (Mt 28:20) - So always!

That was a promise. A promise to his disciples then and at the same time a promise to all the baptized of all times and of all generations. So it was also a promise to *Sr. Maria Theresa Scherer*. And she knew in her heart that it was also up to her to live from this promise and to respond to this promise through her life and work.

She has lived this connection to God and at the same time to the people in the manifold needs of her time. For her, this often meant a source of hardship, and at the same time a source of strength for her life and work, with all the challenges and struggles associated with it, but also successes and joys.

Dear Sisters and brothers, we too are called to take *our paths in this time*. These too are connected with challenges and struggles of their own kind - but also with successes and joys.

Here we have a role model - *Sr. Maria Theresa Scherer*. And, as the experience of many people who pray here at her grave testifies, at the same time a powerful intercessor before the throne of eternal love, always accompanying us to the throne of God.

For we too are - as she was - as baptized also called. And we too are - as she was - as baptized also sent!

And we too are - as she was - as called and sent also companion - in and through the world of today - to and with the people whom we meet. Let us not forget that! Amen.

A Spiritual Place - the Crypt of Mother M. Theresa

Sr. Christiane Jungo, Ingenbohl

The idea of organizing special pilgrimage days during the year has become a 30 year old tradition which meets the needs of many people.

We welcomed many individual pilgrims in 1988 - the 100th Death Anniversary of Mother M. Theresa becoming a connecting element. This became a pilgrimage day. Regardless of the day of the week, the 16th of each month was special to pilgrims. Already at the first Holy Mass, the crypt was too small to accommodate the many worshippers.

The convent church was also filled. That remained so - month after month. Before the jubilee year ended, we received requests to continue with the pilgrimage day. What was thus planned for one year has now become a permanent programme spanning 30 years. The festive Mass in the morning followed by a pilgrim prayer in the afternoon and a full Compline in the crypt in the evening. The pilgrim days have become occasions for learning the faith.

The pilgrims' Masses are mostly based on the theme of the daily readings and accordingly emphasize an attitude of Mother Theresa, who can give us guidance for everyday life. Each priest has a different perception of

the virtues of Mother M. Theresa. The musical arrangement also suits the pilgrims: small and large formations of instrumentalists delight the faithful, choirs enliven the Services with festive songs, alphorns bring native sounds into the church, etc. Many pilgrims emphasize that praying and singing in a full church raise up and benefit their souls. For women and men of all levels, the 16th of every month is a fixed day in the appointment calendar. For me it is a living experience of Psalm 122: "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD'!"

Some also use the pilgrims' day for visits with the sisters, for having spiritual conversations and confessions. Many people are burdened by worries of life, or seek answers to their deepest questions. Most of the time, we cannot provide any immediate solutions. But a bit of attentive listening and the promise of taking their concerns into one's prayers afford them comfort. Above all, the time at Mother Theresa's grave gives them strength and comfort. The pilgrims frequently summarize



Pilgrims' Mass in the crypt

their experiences as: "In the crypt I simply feel different" or: "This room is filled with a special power" or: "It is as if heaven was leaning towards the earth". What the writer noted in 1938 is still valid today: "Mother's grave is seldom alone."

We also see how faith is passed on from generation to generation in the crypt: Grandparents come with their grandchildren, young families with their children light little candles, tell about the good

Mother M. Theresa in heaven, take a picture booklet on biblical stories at hand, spend some time and continue their journey. The most diverse people - near and far from the church - feel at home in the crypt. The crypt is a sacred place. Those who stay here for a while feel taken in by a cloud of prayers that have gathered here.

Sr. Sébastienne Keel, who died in 1997, speaks to many from the heart when she says:

Mother M. Theresa,
when I kneel at Your grave,
then gratitude rises in me,
then I know that dying means continuing to live,
then sufferings of countless people touch me,
then a wave of trust surrounds me,
then God's mercy surrounds me,
that taught You mercy,
then I know myself a leaf on the big tree,
then I feel that this place is holy ground,
then I sense Your wide heart,
then I believe that You are a saint.

Information from the General Leadership

Appointment

On 2nd October, 2018, the General Leadership has appointed a new Provincial Leadership for the **India North East Province** for the next three years:

Provincial Superior: Sr. Pushpita
Chathamalil
Assistant: Sr. Alice A.
Pendanath
Councilors: Sr. M. Christi
Kuzhuveil
Sr. Pratima Minj
Sr. Annie Jose
Sr. Helen Lopes
Official Start: 15th February, 2019

On 2nd October, 2018, the General Leadership has appointed a new Provincial Leadership for the newly erected **India East Province** for next three years:

Provincial Superior: Sr. Celine
Chemmamdiyil
Assistant: Sr. Benny
D'Cunha
Councilors: Sr. Theresa
Dorjee
Sr. Grace Mary
Thockanattu
Sr. Sherin Jose
Kalathiparambil
Official Start: 2nd January, 2019

We sincerely thank the sisters who are newly or re-appointed for leadership in the provinces of India North East and India East for their readiness to accept this demanding mission. We wish them strength, courage and confidence for their mission. May God's blessing be with them!

Our heartfelt thanks to the outgoing Provincial Superior Sr. Valsa Thottiyil for her nine years of committed, loyal and selfless service for the good of the sisters and the India North East Province and for the success of the process for the restructuring of the Province on 2nd January, 2019. We wish her all the best and God's abundant blessing for her future mission.

General Visitation

The General Visitation of the Province Switzerland will take place from 24th February, to 6th April, 2019. Sr. Marija Brizar and all the General Councilors will conduct this visitation and visit the sisters in places, where they, day by day, as individuals and as a community, try to put into practice the charism of our Congregation. May God's good Spirit accompany all concerned during the weeks of the visitation and support them in their meetings, discussions and consultations.

Note

In a later edition of Theodosia, we will report on the merging of the Western Switzerland Province and the Mother Province into the Switzerland Province. The event will be celebrated in Ingenbohl on 15th February and in Fribourg on

16th February, 2019.

We will also be able to report on the restructuring of the India North East Province later. On 2nd February, 2019, two provinces will emerge from the India North East Province, namely India North East and India East with the Provincial House in Siligurj, West Bengal.

Christmas Greetings from the Mother House in Pictures

Statues of Christmas crib by Sr. Clarella Schäfler, died on 17th August, 2016





Quarterly
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