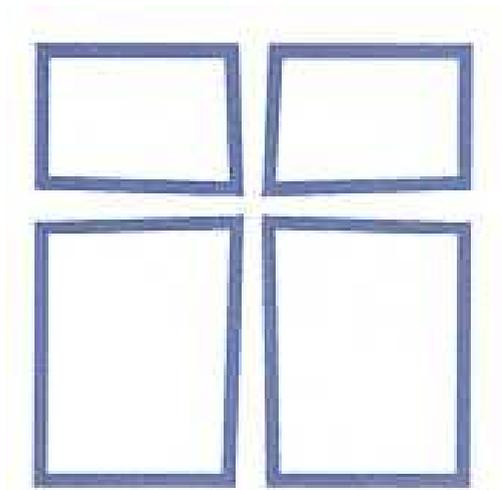


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# *Theodosia*

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Quarterly  
of the Sisters of Mercy  
of the Holy Cross  
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Sr. Caritas Müller OP, Cazis CH, history and time in God's hands

## Editorial

For months, our lives have been dominated by the Corona pandemic. It confronts us with experiences that we have not yet faced in our lives. At regular intervals, Sister Marija Brizar, our Superior General, has sent us news about the daily life of the sisters in all the provinces and vicariates. More than usual, we feel like a big family, sharing a common concern, and grateful for any positive news. Mother M. Theresa would encourage us: "Do not despair, but look to Him from whom all strength comes."

For "Theodosia" Nos. 3 and 4, texts, events and images were provided by the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter of our Congregation. As is well known, it has been postponed for one year.

Now a double number appears with contents that have mainly resulted from the ongoing history of the Institute.

In the first article, Josef Epping advises us to hear and listen, namely, "Do What God Does."

On the feast day of Mother M. Theresa, Fr. Emmeram Stacheder OFM showed us a special place in the convent church in Ingenbohl: "The Place Where Heaven and Earth Meet Each Other."

The sisters of Styria-Carinthia had great plans to commemorate 150 years of their work. The celebration took place - just differently than planned. Magdalena Schauer reports about it in the news of the religious communities of Austria: "Our Ongoing Journey."

The Baden-Württemberg Province, which was founded 125 years ago, also had the occasion to celebrate. Sr. Josefa Harter briefly summarizes the history under the title: "Our Provincial House Should Be Here."

Fifty years ago, the so-called "Indian Mission" became the first Indian Province. Sisters from the present five Indian provinces report on their celebrations, "Reminiscing the Past with Gratitude." - Golden Jubilee of the first Indian Province.

The sisters in the Vicariate Taiwan pass on their charism to associate women and men in the "Circle of Friends of Mercy". Sr. Michelle Huang and some of the members share about the journey of this group.

With a brief glimpse, we survey the previous 22 General Chapters of our Congregation: "Our General Chapters," compiled by Sr. Canisia Mack (Chapters 1880-1996) and Sr. Christiane Jungo (Chapters 2002-2014).

The Province Baden-Württemberg opened the Theodosius Academy of the Foundation of Hegne Convent on February 14, 2020. In an interview, Sr. Benedicta-Maria Kramer and Markus R. T. Cordemann, Director of the Theodosius Academy, explain what characterizes this new foundation.

A poem for a current cause: "Corona" by Max Feigenwinter from his poetry collection - and even this...

Through the "Information from the General Leadership" we learn about new appointments of the Provincial Leadership in the provinces of Czech Republic and Switzerland.

Sr. Christiane Jungo

## Do What God Does

Josef Epping in "Christian in the present",  
volume 72, no. 29, July 19, 2020

The Corona period not only shows us limits, but also new possibilities. One of the limits is the apparent powerlessness. The counsel in the following article is to do what God does, namely to hear and to listen.

**Suffocation can happen due to lack of air to breathe. In such cases all that remains is a mere groan - but God continues to listen.**

The sufferings of the present time - many people would certainly have something to say about this topic today. The concern of many contemporaries about toilet tissue can be amusing, but then came the difficulties of child care, or the uncertain vacation trip, for many also reduced work hours or even unemployment. Many interest groups are currently vociferously pointing out how their own area is suffering and with a lot of rhetorical effort are demanding support from society and the state.

With sober consideration one will have to say that the suffering is very unevenly spread during this time. Those who cannot raise their voice suffer in silence. These are, for example, people in old-age homes and nursing homes

suffering in their loneliness. People in institutions for the mentally handicapped who do not know what happens to them when relatives no longer care for them, foreign workers employed in abattoirs who cry secretly at night from exhaustion and pain, and then - regardless of the pandemic - children who suffer sexual violence. It will take them years and decades to be able to say what has been done to them.

St. Paul writes in chapter 8 to the Christian community in Rome about "the sufferings of the present time" (verse 18). It is noticeable that in this passage of his letter, Paul identifies the suffering situation several times with a Greek word related to our "groaning" (in Bible translations it is often translated as "groaning"): the whole creation is groaning in travail together until now (v. 22), we ourselves groan inwardly and wait for redemption (v. 23), God's Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words (v. 26).

Paul refers to our first natural reaction to pain and suffering are such inarticulate sounds as sighing, sobbing, wailing, moaning, whimpering, lamenting and groaning. These German words are used to echo the sound that the body produces under internal pressure. All these noises are based on the forced, not free flowing breath. Those who are alone in their suffering often cannot get beyond these forms of expression for pain. Words are missing. One needs a person with whom one can talk, so that these words can gradually be found.

Paul hears the pain not articulated in words in the whole creation. He hears it in the suffering human being. He knows: God understands this groaning, sighing, sobbing, moaning, wailing, whimpering and lamenting. It is already prayer. God does not need any big words. He does not need artfully formulated prayers. Paul goes even further: God's Spirit makes the wordless groaning of creation and man into his own groaning. And so he himself intercedes for human beings and all creatures becoming their advocate and pleading for them.

The forced breath is a symbol for the suffering of the creature. If someone intercedes for us in our suffering, we can breathe again, our breath can flow freely. Paul knows this when he brings the Spirit of God into play in the face of the "sufferings of this time". In many languages the word for breath is also the word for the Spirit. "The breath of life is the Spirit of God," says the theologian and spiritual director Thomas Philipp.

"Do what God does" is the title of a chapter in the fifty-year-old classic of Christian prayer by Jörg Zink "How we can pray". This is an idea for people who think about how they can react to the current crisis: Do what God does - listening, not where there is a loud sound, but listening to the wordless pain of those with no voice. Do what God does - make these people be heard, stand up for them, make yourself their advocate, put their suffering into words - in a loud voice.

With permission of the publishing house "Christian in the present", Herder Publishing Company, and the author Josef Epping, high school teacher for catholic religion and German at the Franz-Stock-Gymnasium in Neheim-Hüsten.

## **The Place, Where Heaven and Earth Meet Each Other**

### **Homily on the Feast of the Blessed Mother Maria Theresa Scherer**

Fr. Emmeram Stacheder OFM, Rector Ecclesiae, Ingenbohl

Hundreds of sermons and speeches entwine themselves around the life of Mother M. Theresa. Each one opens a new approach to her life. Each one draws a new trace for our life - just like the homily on the feast day in the convent church.

Dear Sisters,  
Graubünden - Where Switzerland touches the heavens. That was the title of a television documentary about this canton last Sunday on SWR. Graubünden, especially Chur, became the first major place of work for Sr. Maria Theresa Scherer on March 1, 1852, after seven years of restless changes at various places. The Holy Cross Hospital the Planaterra, the formation of young religious congregation, the management of the hospital and many other things. "Very unwillingly" she went there, she says herself. But under her leadership, a center was soon established there that combined training and charity, school and nursing.

The political situation, however, was not well-disposed toward her work and severely limited her activities. Thus, a new foundation was established in Ingenbohl, where Sr. Maria Theresa then

moved in 1857 as the first elected Superior General. This became her second and largest place of life and work. The new place where heaven and earth meet each other.

Multiple pioneering works, sometimes in the poorest conditions, cost a lot of energy. It is all the more astonishing what this woman has achieved and built. Her deep inwardness, her connection to God strengthened her in her work and action. After prayer and silence, she made her decisions and carried them out consistently. In her person Mary and Martha from Bethany were united in a special way. Listening to God's voice in silence and prayer gave her the strength to do good work.

This also gave her the strength to endure the hostilities and false insinuations that she was confronted with, even from the ranks of the clergy. "Although I



Way up to convent Ingenbohl

must confess that I am anxious about the future, I can say strengthened by the grace from above, that I am not afraid!" This is what she writes in a letter to the sisters.

It is therefore quite clear that in 1888 the first issue of the "Swiss Portraits Gallery" published the picture of the Superior General of Ingenbohl as the fourth of eight personalities, together with Federal and National Councillors and artists. This is significant, especially in a time when the ideas and hateful attitude towards the church and religion, especially

towards the monasteries, were still alive.

There are some places: Brother Klaus, Bernarda Bütler, Margrit Bays, just to name a few. But for us, Ingenbohl is that place where people experience and learn. But it is not only places where this can be felt. More than that: they are people who let themselves be touched by God and then again touch people in word and deed. The word which lets people, live and revive. The Word that brings reconciliation and peace that creates justice. Justice is the basis for mercy. Both are shown

in the works of charity. "Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me," as the Gospel says. Through these deeds and words, heaven and earth, God and man meet.

The interface between heaven and earth is thus man himself. In this sense, Mother M. Theresa is also an interface between heaven and earth. The place of everyday life was for her the place of God's presence in the works and words of charity. For us, too, everyday life is the actual place of God's presence, not just specifically chosen places or locations.

This is also said in the legend of the two monks who were on their way in search for this fabulous place where heaven and earth meet and finally arrived back in their cell. That place where they have been happy and experienced happy moments.

Everyday life as a place of the presence of God, this is what Mother M. Theresa wants to tell us and to give us today. Thus, her tomb in the crypt has become an interface that connects heaven and earth, bringing God and man closer to each other.

During the time of the Corona crisis, when many things are no longer as usual, this place is for many a window to heaven. The place of that hope, that reaches into life beyond all limitations. The large number of lights, gave and give testimony of this. A place where people experience the strength that helps them to live again. In the crypt this is expressed by the colors brown and blue. It is the meeting of the heavens with the earth and vice versa.

Ingenbohl - where Switzerland meets the heavens. Not only the country, but also the people who come here, experience it. And this does not apply just for blessed Maria Theresa Scherer. We are all called to holiness through baptism and confirmation. Through us, our words and works of love, justice, reconciliation and peace, can become the place where the earth meets heaven. If we overcome our "fears of meeting", it can happen. Fear of contact with God and with people. Let us make efforts and, in the words of Mother M. Theresa: "Do what lies in your power day after day." Amen.

## Our Ongoing Journey

### Establishment of the province Styria-Carinthia 150 years ago

Magdalena Schauer: "Religious communities of Austria"

The sisters in Graz had imagined their jubilee to be solemn and grand. There was a celebration, but due to the corona pandemic, it was different from what was planned. It was not for the first time in their history that something was done differently from what was planned.

### The Feast Day

In the middle of June 2020, the feast of Blessed Mother Maria Theresa Scherer was celebrated in the convent church of the Holy Cross Sisters in Graz. Much had been planned for the 150th anniversary year of the founding of the Province, which now could not take place. However a small, dignified celebration with Bishop Kapellari took place.



Eva Maria Heigel, from the Business Management, Sr. Maria Bosco Zechner, Bishop em. Egon Kapellari. Photo: Neuhold in SONNTAGSBLATT

Under the theme, "Life in abundance is given to us - we are still on the way", this jubilee year is celebrated to commemorate the commitment of 1500 sisters in 130 places of mission.

Bishop Egon Kapellari called Mother Maria Theresa Scherer an unusual, great, strong woman and thanked the sisters for their fidelity to the Church in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council: "You have always kept the doors and windows of your institutions and works open to the outside world for everyone."

### Being a Holy Cross Sister

What it means to be part of this community is beautifully expressed on the Sisters' own homepage:

"We Holy Cross Sisters make no grand proclamations, but we convey an important message through our actions.

The cross means for us a faithful devotion and constant adaptation for the good, which originates from a firm faith in love.

In this very faith based on love, we do not ignore suffering and failure, but proactively turn to these realities of life, being one with those in need, being attentive to the present, and being grateful for all that we accomplish."

### **The intention was to combat the increasing adversity**

Like many other Christian communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross (Holy Cross Sisters) was born out of perceived need to combat the increasing adversity.

The Swiss Capuchin Father Theodosius Florentini (1808 - 1865) set as his goal to alleviate the pressing social problems of the time and the misery of the factory workers, and above all to fight against the causes of this misery - lack of education, the educational deficit of the youth, and finally the exploitative capitalist economic system. Father Theodosius wanted a social renewal not in a revolutionary way, but from the innovative power of Christianity, which would be effective through school and works of service.

Together with Sr. Maria Theresa Scherer (1825 - 1888), the first Superior General and co-founder of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, he was able to inspire and motivate many women to an apostolic

religious life.

### **Part of the great women's movement**

The rapidly growing community became a part of the great "women's movement" of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sisters became involved where their help was most urgently needed: In homes for the poor, in homes for the elderly, in institutions for the physically and mentally challenged, and in prisons, they cared for people who were forgotten by society. They taught in kindergartens and schools, looked after the boarding schools and boarding houses for apprentices, in order to pave a way for a better life through education.

But the sisters were also available whenever they were called upon to care for wounded soldiers in battlefields and military hospitals, or the sick in epidemic areas. "Totally given to the Crucified, therefore totally given to the neighbour – true witnesses of the love of Christ" was the inscription of Mother Maria Theresa on the tomb of the first four sisters, who had fallen victim during the care of typhoid patients in Rome at a young age.

Up to this day, this pioneering spirit of the founders is still alive in the community: "We are trying to respond to the needs of the time even today and to advocate for a 'culture of love'."

## Our Provincial House Should Be Here 125 Years of Province Baden-Württemberg

Sr. Josefa Harter, Hegne



Hegne at Lake Constance. Photo: Convent Hegne

### **A quick glimpse into the past and the present**

"We must make our Provincial house here," was the wish expressed by our foundress, Mother Maria Theresa Scherer, as she passed the Hegne castle estate on her way along Lake Constance towards Constance in 1886. It would become the convent residence for about 250 sisters who were already working in southern Germany at that time.

In 1895 this wish was fulfilled with the establishment of the present Province Baden-Württemberg. So this year we Holy Cross Sisters of Hegne are celebrating our 125th anniversary.

Over the decades, the main focuses of our work developed: nursing, education and training, spiritual and physical well-being. The facilities in Hegne still serve these tasks today, and in the

course of history about 2700 sisters have also dedicated themselves to these services in numerous communities. For about twenty years we have been fulfilling our mission with a growing number of employed staff, now about 300. The community of sisters has just over 200 sisters with an average age of 80.

With these figures in mind, in 2013 we asked the following question in a provincial chapter: How can our services for the people, which have been repeatedly redesigned and given concrete form over 125 years, and are still relevant today as they were in the early days, be secured

for the future? During several years of a spiritual and professionally accompanied process of organizational development, we were convinced that the establishment of a foundation would guarantee this most securely. Since 2018, the "Hegne Convent Foundation" has been created, into which our establishments in Hegne are gradually being transferred. We hope that under the umbrella of the foundation, the mission of the sisters can be continued at the distinctive place of Hegne Convent, that the charism of the founders is kept alive and carried forward under new conditions and in concrete terms.

## **Reminiscing the Past with Gratitude**

### **Golden Jubilee of the First Indian Province 1970 - 2020**

Sisters from five Indian Provinces

From 1894-1970 India was the "Indian Mission" for us sisters. In 1970, 50 years ago, it was raised to the status of the "Indian Province". Already in 1991, it was restructured into three provinces: India Central, India North East and India South. Mid India was erected as the fourth Indian Province in 2015, and India East, the fifth Indian Province in 2019.

#### **Looking back the past with gratitude**

The genesis of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in India could be traced from the arrival of our four heroic and daring pioneer sisters from Mother House Ingenbohl, Switzerland on 22 November 1894 in Bettiah, North Bihar. We owe great appreciation for the courageous venture of the then Mother General, Mother Pankratia Widmer. Gradually our sisters expanded the mission through social, medical and educational ministries particularly by working in the Government Hospitals in Bettiah since 1915, Hazaribag since 1939, and Muzaffarpur since 1949. At the request of Rev. Fr. Turkenburg S.J. Hazaribag, we expanded our mission to tribal belt Mahuadanr, Chechari valley, the extreme parts of South Bihar in 1944 and Hazaribag became the centre of our mission from 1952.

In 1952 the Indian girls were received in the Congregation, since then the number of Indian sisters increased. The development of the Indian mission and the increase in the number of the sisters brought forth abundant fruit and served various needs of the people of India. Consequently, Indian mission was raised to the status of a Province on 03 March 1970. Mother Angelica Wildhaber, the 8<sup>th</sup> and the last Mission Superior handed over the mission of India to Sr. M. Sigrid Voggel, the first Provincial Superior with 185 sisters (38 missionaries) 36 novices and 99 candidates. We remember gratefully the then Mother General, Mother Edelfrieda Haag and the General Team who sowed the seed at the right time which flourished and branched out in the course of time. The period between 1970 and 1980 was a decade of rapid expansion under the inspiring and dynamic leadership of Sr. M. Sigrid Voggel,



Bishop Anand Jojo and the concelebrants

with her wide and far reaching vision and active compassion for the poor.

A good number of communities and apostolates were opened in various parts of India and the Indian Province expanded to all four corners. Thus, the Province needed a restructuring.

Under the vibrant leadership of Sr. M. Julia Erni, the second Provincial Superior, the province was divided into five regions in 1983 and Regional Superiors were appointed to function with delegated authorities.

By the end of the second decade of the Indian Province, we arrived at a significant juncture of the

development with reorganization of the first Indian Province into 3 provinces in 1991 under the benevolent leadership of Sr. Joseline E. Pauvath the first Indian Provincial. This later was re-structured, one from Central Province in 2015 under the effective leadership of Sr. Vijaya Minj and one from North East Province in 2019 under the charismatic leadership of Sr. Valsa Thottiyil.

Today we are spread out in five provinces with 1054 sisters in 147 communities in India and 08 sisters in Africa witnessing our Charism.

The theme of the Golden Jubilee was, "Reminiscing the past with gratitude, Reviewing the present with openness and Responding to the future with courage".

Profoundly we remember our Founder Fr. Theodosius Florentini OFM cap., our Co-founderess Bl. Mother Maria Theresa Scherer, Mission Superiors and all our missionaries for their vision and mission. We are very much indebted to the General Administration and all the Provinces in Europe for their generous financial assistance, for various apostolic activities and for the education of our formees. Without such support the Indian Provinces would not have grown into what it is today. Also we are grateful to our benefactors and funding agencies from abroad to continue the work among the poor and needy.

With deep gratitude we remember all the Mother Generals and their teams, especially Mother Pankratia Widmer, Mother Edelfrieda Haag, Mother Gertrud Furger, Mother Louise-Henri Kolly and Mother Marija Brizar for their constant support and guidance. We are grateful to the General Councillors Sr. M. Liguoria Binkert and Sr. Debora Maria Ueckert, who were responsible for the Indian Mission before the Indian

General Councillors took up this responsibility.

I am very much grateful to Sr. Marija Brizar, our dear Superior General and the Sisters in the General Team. A special thanks to Sr. Marija Brizar for her very inspiring and encouraging message for the day of Golden Jubilee. The presence of Sr. Sheeja representing the General Team doubled our joy.

We express our heartfelt thanks to the Ecclesial Authorities especially Bishops of different Dioceses and Religious Congregations who have helped us to expand our mission in various places. Finally our appreciation and gratitude to all our benefactors, collaborators, well wishers from the Church as well as the Government Departments, NGOs and Civil Society for their support and encouragement.

God of Compassion and Mercy, we thank you for the many blessings we have received for the past 50 years of life and mission of the first Indian Province, as Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. As the disciples on the way to Emmaus were enlightened by you, grant us the grace to recognize you, in our journey with the people.

Sr. Rosily Kolencherry, Provincial Superior  
Central Province

## More than an external celebration

The Golden Jubilee of our Indian province is a year of Blessing for all the Sisters in India. For the sisters of India East province this occasion was a home coming experience since we were all formed in the Hazaribag Novitiate and belonged to the one vast province till 1991.

Being in Hazaribag and going through the celebration program was a reminiscing for all of us of our own personal past. Some of us took this opportunity to make a pilgrimage in solitude and silence

through the important spots and places in the novitiate house and its surroundings. It was a heartwarming experience to be in the chapel, at the grotto, in the dining room, class room, sewing room, kitchen, pantry and different work areas. Some went around in small groups and shared with each other the happy experiences of growing up there as a young person under training, for religious life. It was a deep inner experience of the heart which strengthened us to move ahead in life with courage to do our best in our own mission field for the rest of our lives.



Offertory procession

It was a challenge to review our lives and a call for personal conversion and community renewal after the holy lives of our pioneers and many of the sisters who led committed lives of prayer, service, simple living to bring up the Indian Province.

It was a great joy to meet many sisters and to see again some sisters whom we had not met ever since the branching off in 1991. There was embracing, hugging, laughing, and crying out of joy. The very fact of being together for this big and special celebration strengthened the bond and the family spirit. All of us felt we were home again and a warm atmosphere prevailed everywhere.

We are very grateful for this privilege of attending the celebrations and a group photo was taken of all the sisters and the photographers tried to include all. Oh, what a big crowd it was!!

Sister Selma Nalloor  
for India East Province

**Inheritors of a wonderful tradition**

“The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field” Mt.13:31. Jesus compared the kingdom to a tiny mustard seed which is the smallest of all the seeds but when it has grown, it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. This is the imagery that welled up in our minds as we were privileged to participate in the Golden Jubilee celebration. The daring and sacrificing spirit of our pioneer sisters amidst many hurdles and hardships, together with all our Indian missionaries who were filled with dynamic spirit and powerful vision of our founders made it possible for this tiny seed to take root and grow into a large shrub today.

We are indeed the proud inheritors and flag bearers of a wonderful tradition of unceasing, empowering compassion in the varied needs of the present time. It is a great joy for us that this tiny little plant has spread out its strong five branches, covering the hallowed earth of our motherland.



Sr. Rosily Kolencherry, Provincial Superior, India Central, welcomes the participants

It was a golden moment of Communion: of meeting, sharing, refreshing, recalling, reliving the rich memories of the bygone years and it was an experience of BEING HOME: in touch with the source and origin in India. It renewed our friendship, our oneness and our belongingness to this large family under the banner of Holy Cross.

The liturgy wonderfully highlighted our small beginnings, growth and development. We could experience an aura of divine

intervention in the life and history of our existence in the Indian soil.

The past was made present through a drama, that touched and moved us to the core of our being and it still lingers on, in our hearts and minds. It opens to us new vistas of commitment, passion and untiring spirit to alleviate any kind of suffering and pain from the face of the earth.

What has been achieved are written in golden letters in the annals of our congregation but

the Charism and motto lives on in the hearts and lives of each of us who live today. We strain forward to what lies ahead, toward the goal, for the prize of heavenly glory.

We hope and pray that what is yet to come will surpass all that we

have done so far and GOD will lead us on... Let us hold on to the legacy that is handed on to us and be flag bearers till to the end.

Sr. Annette Purayidam and Sr. Shanty George  
for Holy Cross, South Province



50 lights, thanking for 50 years

## **Women of hope**

The Indian Province was born fifty years ago. It had its ups and downs. It has posted many triumphs, climbed many steps, faced many challenges and weathered many storms. We remembered, cherished and relived many unforgettable events on 15 February 2020.

However, as we look back at the years gone by, there wells up an overwhelming sense of gratitude, happiness, a deep contentment and confidence that the Lord has guided us to this day. There still remains one unchanging reality, the true human spirit that is inspired by our Founders, a sense of dedication to work for the underprivileged as women of hope.

The evening cultural program highlighted love, respect and optimism for our founders and pioneering missionaries. It reminded us that our founders and pioneers were indeed the signs of God, leaven for the growth of a just society and prophets of the least and the lost. During the celebration of the Holy Eucharist,

we felt that the Golden Jubilee celebration is a time to forge ahead with courage, to reach greater heights of compassionate services and to achieve new milestones of success with immense enthusiasm, optimism and confidence. As Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, working in five Provinces in India, our call is for dedication and commitment in the changing scenario of our time locally, nationally, and globally, spreading rays of light and compassion far and wide.

Sr. Pushpita Chathamalil, Provincial Superior  
North East Province

## **Being taken to the very roots**

Coming to Hazaribag, the place of my childhood days of religious life, always instil in me a kind of awe and respect, a very positive and vibrant feeling. Warm welcome in the provincial house with a red rose for every sister and the beautiful decorations everywhere put me in a romantic mood. The two days were like reliving the past with gratitude and energizing the present with the spirit and charism of our Holy Cross Family.



Indian Provincial Superiors with the Bishop and the priests

“Reminiscing the past with gratitude” the drama staged took me to the very roots of Holy Cross Tree in India. It was a deeply moving account of the past made alive. Once again we witnessed the power of faith, strong determination and total commitment of our pioneers that produced lasting fruits in plenty. It helped me to witness once again the hard and painful reality of our origin in India when 3 of the 4 Pioneer sisters succumbed to death by cholera. The grain of wheat had to fall and die.....

The centre of all celebrations was the Eucharist. We offered

ourselves during the liturgy to continue to follow Jesus following the footsteps of our founders and reach their vision to every corner of India. Beautiful entrance dance and the ritual of reception, of Bishop and the concelebrants to the altar added solemnity. It was very touching to see 50 sisters from all five provinces offered a lighted candle with floral decoration, at the feet of Mother Mary seeking her help in our mission.

A profound message of the Bishop of Hazaribag, Rt. Rev. Anand Jojo, confirming the service of Holy Cross sisters over these

years was strengthening. A globe and a Sapling representing the whole Congregation and the first Indian province respectively were part of the offertory procession.

The two-day program of Golden Jubilee is a success story in terms of meticulous planning and team work. Be it accommodation, decoration, stage program, Liturgy, honoring the persons who bore the heat of the 50 years life of Holy Cross Indian Province and the festive meal, in everything

team spirit, commitment and the able leadership of Sr. Rosily left lasting impressions in the hearts of all who witnessed it. The sisters in the province worked like a well-oiled machine with no hindrance or confusion and made the Golden Jubilee celebration a Big Success.

Sr. Lucina Thuluvanonical,  
for Mid-India Province

Text editing: Sr. Verena Maria Oberhauser,  
General Councillor, Ingenbohl

## **Circle of Friends of Mercy Associates in Vicariate Taiwan**

Sr. Michelle HuangTatung-Malän, Taiwan

In the Vicariate Taiwan, about twenty women are living out the charism of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in their life situation. After a long introduction and a solemn promise, they are accompanied on their way. Personal testimonies tell us about the accompaniment and what it means for the women to be members of the "circle of friends."

### **A beginning - and what it has become**

In times of social changes and declining birth rates, there is a great shortage of spiritual vocations in the Church and in religious orders - which is true in our Vicariate Taiwan too. In 2002, Sr. Jermia Thoma and Sr. Ai-Tschüen Wu started to train women and men as associates of our spirituality and life. A few years of aridity and stagnation followed, but then we set out again in 2014 rekindling from the "embers under the ashes". And now it is "burning" again - and the fire is fed by the regular meetings for exchange, and by the themes of ongoing training programs.

We announced an invitation to become associates of the "Circle of Friends of Mercy" in the

parishes and in our circle of acquaintances. There were 20 interested women between the ages of 30 and 50.

In April 2015, I took over the responsibility of organizing, initiating and accompanying these women for the three-year journey until they were ready to make a public pledge as Associates. Every other Sunday afternoon we meet for sharing and training on the topics: Prayer, Bible, Liturgy, Sacraments, Apostolate, Spirituality, History of our Congregation, Charism, etc.

Together we worked out statutes for the "Circle of Friends of Mercy". On August 15, 2018, 12 women signed their vow formula and handed over to Sr. Theresia Gau, the Vicariate Superior,

during a festive service. Now there are 18 members who, through their commitment are on the way with us Holy Cross Sisters, living out the "Friend of Mercy" call, with the people in the places where they are living.

The celebration of the golden jubilee of religious profession by three Holy Cross Sisters brought into focus for the "friends of mercy", the essential connection between the promise made, and religious living. Now we meet in the afternoon every first Sunday of the month. These meetings are very significant for mutual support and encouragement, as an experience of joy and fellowship, and as an opportunity to deepen the mission as "Friends of Mercy". Of course, we are very happy that one of these women has dared to join the convent - Catherine Takaweita Tien-Chang. She will begin her second year of postulancy in autumn.

In autumn 2019, requests came from the area of Kuanshan, north of Taitung, for an opportunity to be a Christian. In Kuanshan we have

a retirement home especially for the poor.

After a conversation with the local priest, we got the permission to use the parish premises as a meeting place. Sr. Franzi Lin from the community in Kuanshan joined me in the work of accompaniment and took over the organization. We meet with eight women and men twice a month - over a period of time for a Bible sharing, so that the interested people get enough time to feel whether they really want "more" and are ready for a three-year training. We are guided by the sayings of our founder, Father Theodosius: "I wanted to organize the Congregation in such a way that it fits in everywhere, finds acceptance everywhere, and is able to integrate itself into any condition and situation".

Or also: "The need of the time is the will of God". Trusting in God's mercy and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we courageously enter into the future with our Associates, step by step, full of hope that the prayer of our fellow sisters will bear fruit.

## **Testimonies from members**

### **Delan Gau, Associate**

Joyfully follow in the footprints of the founders.

Before I joined the lay community "Friends of Mercy", I only knew how to do good apostolic work in the Church. But I experienced my own limitations and shortcomings and wanted to deepen my spirituality.

It was precisely at this time that the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross let the parishes know that they were going to start a training course for Christians who wanted to join the "Circle of Friends of Mercy". Through this training I have learned a lot and I wish to contribute to the further success of the group. I also hope that our being with the sisters will be of benefit to them.

As a child, I saw the sisters very often - at that time they were all foreigners - and I was impressed by their work and their kindness to the people. I admired them for leaving their homes and families to spend their teenage years helping the poor and illiterate here in Taiwan -Taitung.

I am very grateful to have known the founding spirit of Mother Maria Theresa and Father Theodosius Florentini. They worked for the poor, the sick, the elderly, orphans, factory workers and in schools. Mother M. Theresa is a great woman of trust and faith. She strengthens her sisters: "Do what you can day after day". Or "Have patience, persevere, pray and trust in a loving God". These sentiments also give me strength.

The words and deeds of Mother Maria Theresa and Father Theodosius touch me, they give me strength and courage for my daily life, they help me to let go and to make good use of the time given by God. After taking the vows before God and the Sisters to make myself completely available in the "Circle of Friends of Mercy", I decided to do volunteer work and together with the sisters, alone, or with other members, visit sick, lonely, elderly people. I also help with the distribution of materials, etc. This strengthens my faith and gives me the strength to encourage others.

I hope that the spirit of the founders Mother Theresa and

Father Theodosius will continue to accompany my life and that my small ministry will be blessed by God and that I will be able to make a good impact on others.

**Magdalena Lin, Associate**

It is God's grace that I joined the "Circle of Friends of Mercy". Whenever worries come over me, I know that God is with me and I receive comfort and inner joy. In this circle of friends I was allowed to get to know the spirit of Mother Maria Theresa Scherer and Father Theodosius Florentini. I understand even better what Jesus says in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". In what the sisters do, I see the love and warming light of God. With other members or alone I visit sick or old people, listen to them, pray with them. I experience that these people long for God and need people who have time for them. Again and again I ask myself which need of the time is the will of God. I want to be "salt of the earth

**Maria Liu, Associate**

I am grateful to God for allowing me to join the "Circle of Friends of Mercy". Through the intensive preparation, I have experienced a lot of joy and my daily life has been overshadowed with this joy.

Through Bible sharing, I have grown deeper into the Word of Sacred Scripture, now I understand the liturgy of the Church year better, and I have learned to pray in this way. I got to know the spirit of Father Theodosius and Mother Maria Theresa in a completely new way and also came to know the religious life of the religious sisters.

After the training period, I made the promise, and as a group we now meet once a month. We have a schedule of topics, and at our meetings we choose a topic and discuss it. We also invite speakers.

Every 16<sup>th</sup> of the month (June 16 is the death anniversary of Mother Mary Theresa) we come together for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. It is prepared by one or two members.



Sr. Michelle Huang with the members of the friends' circle

We also support the needs of the sisters, visit the sick in the hospital, or help in both host bakeries.

I am grateful that I belong to the Associates. This is a great support, especially after my accident.

### **Theresa Gau, Associate**

There are constant disagreements between my husband and his siblings. I take care of his parents who live with us. They often feel dissatisfaction and complain to their sons and daughters. The result is quarrels with my husband's siblings who, after all,

only hear one side. Family pressure weighed heavily on me and brought me to the brink of despair. Fortunately, I was able to cling to faith and trusted in God's help. Thank God, I took the opportunity and decided to take the training course to become an Associate of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. Through the various topics such as the Bible, spirituality, the founding spirit of Mother Maria Theresa Scherer and Father Theodosius, liturgy, ways of praying, etc., and the conversations with sisters and priests have helped me to

understand my own situation. This has given me the confidence that I am never abandoned by God, whatever may come my way. Today this experience has become a strong force in my life and in my faith, so that I have the courage to face everything. I have learned to listen, comfort and encourage. I also learned to pray for the family and for help in the difficulties. Prayer is a great strength.

The "Circle of Friends of Mercy" is a great support in my daily life. In the members and the sisters I have a counterpart with whom I can share my worries, needs and joys. The monthly meeting strengthens my religious life. I am very grateful.

### **Martha Mai, Associate**

Four years ago I registered for the "Circle of Friends of Mercy" and after a training period of two and a half years I made the promise.

The group has a wonderful mutual understanding. We stand for each other, help and support each other. We share with each other how God is working in our lives and discover our own talents. At the end of our time together, that

is, before we leave, we reflect on what has happened to us and to the group and where we need to change.

When I see the commitment and spirit of the apostolate of the sisters, and know that there is a lack of young religious, I understand that the sisters depend on women and men - associates, who in their spirit continue their apostolate. We lay people have different vocations, and we want to live our vocation as associates in our everyday life in the spirit of the founders of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, Mother Maria Theresa Scherer and Father Theodosius Florentini.

The "Circle of Friends of Mercy" has visited the various works of the sisters. We are ready to serve as volunteers. I am very impressed with how the sisters treat the differently abled children and I am grateful for the opportunity to work in the home for children with disabilities. I want to use what I have learned wherever I can, whether it is in the work of the sisters or in the parish. I want to be leaven for others.

## Our General Chapters

Sr. Canisia Mack, Hegne, Sr. Christiane Jungo, Ingenbohl

In an overview, Sr. Canisia Mack showed the significance of the General Chapters since 1880 in the Theodosia 2002, 2. She did it leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, which took place in July 2002. She points out how Mother M. Theresa saw in this event as a "means to unity, to strengthen, and promote the good."

We are bringing the text of that time unchanged, and supplementing it with elections, decisions, and recommendations of the General Chapters of 2002, 2008 and 2014. As we know, the announced Chapter 2020 has been postponed to 2021 because of the Corona pandemic.

### 1880 First General Chapter

In the Constitutions approved by Rome in 1879, a new article had been added which states: "Every six years, and as often as the General Administration deems it necessary because of extraordinary circumstances, a general chapter will be held in the place and at the time determined by the Superior General, in agreement with the Cardinal Protector. On this occasion the general state of the congregation is looked into, and matters of prime importance are discussed and decided."

In the month of August 1880 the first general chapter was in session at Ingenbohl. From the very beginning, this gathering at which all the provinces are represented consists of an election chapter and a chapter of affairs.

Those entitled to vote at the first GC (General Chapter) were those

who had been delegated by the sisters of Switzerland, Bohemia, Upper Austria, Slovenia, Styria, Moravia, Baden and Tyrol.

On August 16, Mother M. Theresa was unanimously re-elected as Superior General.

The days that followed were used for meetings during which the delegates were familiarized with the revised statutes.

### 1886

Re-election of Mother M. Theresa. Since the provinces wanted to have a representative in the General Administration, Sr. Adelheid Weindl from Upper Austria was elected to be the fourth General Council as the Councillor. One of the important points of discussion was the change of local superiors after a term of six years.

### 1888

The death of Mother M. Theresa necessitated the convocation of an extraordinary chapter. On September 25, 1888, Sr. M. Pancratia Widmer, the Assistant of M.M. Theresa, was elected as her successor. Suggestions and proposals that had been submitted were postponed, to be dealt with a later GC.

### **1894**

The Election Chapter re-elected Mother M. Pancratia for another term of six years. The General Administration was increased from four to six members.

Prior to the final approbation of the constitutions, Rome asked for further directives; these were laid down in the so-called "Wegweiser" (guide for the way).

The decision was made for the establishment of the province of Baden-Hohenzollern.

### **1900**

This time only an election chapter was held. Once more the delegates re-elected Mother M. Pancratia Widmer for another six years. Sr. M. Aniceta Regli was to be her assistant.

### **1906**

In the month of September, the delegates gathered at Ingenbohl

for the sixth General Chapter. In a unanimous ballot Mother Aniceta Regli was elected as the third Superior General. Due to the serious illness of Mother M. Pancratia, she had already taken care of the more important transactions for the past five years.

In preparation for the General Chapter, she had sent a questionnaire to all the sisters, so as to get a picture of the internal and external state of the congregation. The questions dealt among other things, with progressive efforts in the professional sphere, with relaxation, health care etc.

### **1912**

Re-election of Mother M. Aniceta and new election of four General Councillors.

The former chaplain Battaglia who as Bishop of Chur for years, had shown great interest in the Congregation, was present at this chapter.

Mother M. Aniceta had the interior strengthening of the growing congregation very much at heart.

Bishop Battaglia presented the General Chapter, a meditation book prepared especially for the Congregation that was officially used for daily reflection by all the sisters until 1954.



General Chapter 1921 in Ingenbohl. Front centre: Mother Aniceta Regli, to her right: Mother Theresia Beck, to her left: Mother Agnes Schenk

At this chapter, the foundation of the provinces of Hungary and Slovakia was discussed.

### 1918

The General Chapter could not take place on account of the political circumstances.

### On June 16, 1921

Mother M. Aniceta inaugurated the eighth General Chapter. With words of gratitude they remembered the tangible protection of God, which the congregation had everywhere

experienced during the years of war. When war broke out, she had entrusted Fr. Theodosius with a role of a special advocate before the throne of God.

Mother Theresia Beck was elected as the new Superior General with Sr. M. Agnes Schenk to assist her as her Assistant. Several sisters offered themselves for the American mission.

### 1927

The General Chapter was conducted in the newly built Clinica Quisisana in Rome. This was to call to mind that Father

Theodosius had been to Rome for the first time exactly 75 years earlier (1852), to request Pope Pius IX's approval for his new foundation, and to present its statutes.

The Diamond Jubilee of the Congregation's foundation, the fiftieth year of the Holy Cross Sisters presence in Rome, and the thirtieth year of the permanent approbation of the Constitutions was commemorated.

This General Chapter decided on the separation of the Generalate and the Swiss Procura.

### **1933**

Election of Mother Agnes Schenk as Superior General.

On the basis of detailed reports the delegates took note of the state of the congregation, and reflected on various proposals to cope with the demands of the time. No far-reaching decisions were made.

The political situation in Europe already cast dark its dark shadows.

Due to adverse circumstances no General Chapters could be held in the years **1939** and **1945**.

In 1941 Mother Agnes Schenk died an early death. In 1942, the General Leadership elected Sr. Diomira Brandenburg as the sixth

Superior General of the congregation.

### **Only in 1954**

It was again possible again to invite the sisters to Ingenbohl for the General Chapter.

Sr. Elena Giorgetti assumed her responsibilities as the Superior General.

A new meditation book was prepared for the congregation.

Central to this chapter was the concern for the sisters in the provinces of Eastern Europe and in Mission countries, and also the increasing shortage of sisters.

The foundation of the provinces of Western Switzerland and of USA was part of the chapter of affairs.

The sisters who had been expelled from China could be sent to a new mission field in Formosa (Taiwan).

### **1960**

Re-election of Mother Elena Giorgetti.

Several days were spent in reviewing the most important events of the past six years; Centenary celebration of the Institute Ingenbohl, work in preparation for beatification of Mother M. Theresa and Sr. Ulrika.

Until that time, the 'transactions' between the congregation and the Vatican had been taken care of by the Cardinal Protector. According to a new decree of Holy See, this task could now be entrusted to a sister appointed by the General Administration as General Procuratrix.

In view of the changing times, the sisters were requested to work out suggestions for change of the religious dress and for the amendment of the constitutions.

### **1966**

Election of Sr. Edelfrieda Haag as Superior General, and of three new Councillors.

The Sisters belonging to Swiss Procura (German and Italian speaking) were integrated in the newly erected Swiss Mother province.

Most of the sisters of the entire Congregation remember the 1966 General Chapter as a chapter of reforms.

The new religious dress was presented and discussed in lengthy sessions. The result of those thorough considerations proves to be satisfactory until now.

More important than the decision regarding a change of dress was the Council's mandate to ponder over the constitutions and the

customs of our congregation and to work out a new draft. All religious were directed to "return to the sources". This became our orientation over the coming years. Brazil opened up as a new mission territory.

### **1970 Special Chapter**

A draft for revised constitutions, prepared by the commission, was presented to the participants. The delegates reviewed and discussed this draft, point by point, carefully and responsibly. After weeks of hard work the draft, together with suggestions for applications and changes, was returned to the commission for re-working.

The 'Mission Territory' of India was given the status of 'Province'. The sisters hailing from Slovenia could join the 'Commissariate Slovenia'.

The sending of sisters to the Burundi mission was given approval.

### **1972**

Re-election of Mother Edelfrieda Haag.

The chapter members were asked to study the text of the revised constitutions and directives. After a thorough examination, these were given to the sisters "ad experimentum" (on an experimental basis).



General Chapter 1927 in Rome  
 Front center: Cardinal Protector Wilhelmus Marinus van Rossum, to his right: Msgr. Drehmans, his secretary, to his right: Mother Aniceta Regli, to his left: Mother Theresia Beck, Mother M. Agnes Schenk

**1978**

Election of Sister Gertrud Furger as Superior General and election of two new Councilors.

The Chapter of affairs dealt primarily with an exchange of experiences regarding the constitutions and directives. These were recommended to the sisters for further experience and evaluation.

**1984**

Re-election of Mother Gertrud Furger. Three new Councilors

took up their tasks in the General Administration.

Once more the Constitutions were thoroughly overworked, passed and handed on to a committee for the formulation of the final version. In 1986, the Holy See gave its approbation for the present text of the Constitutions.

**1990**

Rome permitted Mother Gertrud Furger to have another term of six years as Superior General. Two new General Councilors were elected.

For the first time after the downfall of communist regime, delegates from all the countries of Eastern Europe were able to participate in the General Chapter.

The division of the large Indian province into three provinces was seen as a need of the time.

The chapter members approved of the request for sisters to be sent to Uganda.

## 1996

Sister Louise-Henri Kolly was elected as the new Superior General. Two new Councilors assumed their tasks in the General Administration.

The chapter members engaged themselves intensely with the present situation in Church and world, as well as with the challenges that the present situation poses to religious communities. are of concern to the chapter members. The search for possible up-to-date responses formed the central theme of the chapter of affairs.

## 2002

According to the *election chapter* of the 20<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the General Leadership is comprised of the following:

Sr. Louise-Henri Kolly, as re-elected Superior General, the previous councillors Sr. Carol

Crosby, Sr. Marija Brizar, Sr. Monica Teresa Solcà and the newly elected Sr. Petra Niedermayr, Sr. Selma Nalloor and Sr. Tessy Churanadu.

Some of the main concerns of the chapter of affairs are as follows:

*Charism and formation:* The decision to reformulate the charism of our congregation is significant. Likewise, basic principles of formation at the congregational level are to be worked out. Formation is to be understood as a process that includes all phases of human life and of maturing, therefore ongoing formation. A handbook for formation and ongoing formation is to be drafted. The General Leadership entrusts a project group with this task.

*Spiritual community - "being in action":* The mandate of the General Chapter concerns all the communities to work consciously to be **spiritual** communities, because so far we have defined ourselves strongly in terms of activities.

*Restructuring of Provinces and Vicariates:* Due to circumstances in some provinces and vicariates, the General Chapter was challenged to consider the possibility of restructuring provinces/vicariates. Such a



General Chapter 2014 in Ingenbohl

process requires a long-term concept and must be supported by all of us.

*Globalization:* In view of globalization, it is important to make ourselves aware, both at personal and provincial level, of the interconnections, some of which have serious consequences at times. It is not only our consumer behaviour and lifestyle that should be evaluated, but we must also deal with our financial investments ethically and ecologically in a responsible manner.

As far as possible, we join the network of Franciscan or similar grassroots groups working for peace, justice, human rights and care for the creation.

*Vocation ministry:* The General Leadership, the Provincial and Vicariate Leaderships seek for networking of their vocation ministry on the basis of the new guidelines for formation and ongoing formation.

The General Leadership and the Western European Provinces are in favour of having an Inter-Provincial Western European Novitiate.

## **2008**

In the *election chapter* of the 21<sup>st</sup> General Chapter, Sr. Marija Brizar is elected 11<sup>th</sup> Superior General of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross.

Sr. Carol Crosby and Sr. Tessy Churanadu were re-elected as General Councillors.

The Council gets its full complement with four newly elected members: Sr. Verena Maria Oberhauser, Sr. Elsit Ampattu, Sr. Anna Affolter and Sr. Lucila Zovak.

Remembering the *chapter of affairs*:

*Ratio Formationis*: The chapter members are very happy to know that a project group has already completed the assignments given by the Chapter 2002 and that these are available in two small booklets: "Drawing from the Source" (2006) and "Living from the Source", also called "Ratio Formationis" (2008).

The General Chapter adopts the "Ratio Formationis" presented as the formation plan of our Institute. It is also the basis for lifelong formation, as emphasized by Church documents.

*Original writings of the founders*: The General Chapter supports the request to make accessible the original writings of our founders. The General Leadership subsequently appoints a working group. The working method should correspond to scientific requirements.

*Women Trafficking*: A General Chapter always desires to give answers to the challenges and needs of the time. After well-

founded information, the General Chapter considers "women trafficking" as an important issue to which we, as a women's community, must not close our minds. In the future, an international working group will contribute to the formation of awareness among the sisters and seek possibilities for networking with institutions already active in the field of "women trafficking". It should also be considered where and how individual sisters or associates can be active in this apostolate.

*House in Rome*: The General Chapter also advocates securing the future existence of the international community in Rome. The goals remain the same: To cultivate the spirit of internationality and the bond with the worldwide Church.

*Visits to Motherhouse*: Proposals are being collected for the approval of the General Leadership as how to make it possible for sisters from overseas to visit the Motherhouse in the future.

## **2014**

As usual, the General Chapter included *chapter of election* and *chapter of affairs*.

The election chapter elected: Sr. Marija Brizar as Superior General and re-elected Sr. Verena Maria Oberhauser, Sr. Elsit Ampattu, Sr. Anna Affolter, Sr. Lucila Zovak as Councillors, and Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril and Sr. Dorothee Halbach as new Councillors.

Important contents of the *chapter of affairs* were as follows:

*New forms of leadership:* The General Chapter recommends provinces and vicariates seeking new models of community and leadership, being in dialogue with the sisters and exploring ways to implement them. The newly developed models are available to all other provinces and vicariates. The General Chapter decided to use the term "Coordinator" within the Congregation for those persons who, together with the Superior, assume leadership functions within a community and who are not members of the particular Congregation.

*A necessary revision of the statutes:* All congregations founded in Switzerland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century have the form of an association under civil law. This is related to the non-profit purpose of the religious congregations. Since the founding of the society in 1867, the General Leadership

became the Governing Body of the society and had the right to sign. After the establishment of the Mother Province in 1966, it was necessary to search for a legal procedure so that it could function independently as per state law. The 1972 General Chapter subsequently decided to found two legally independent societies.

Now a change in the statutes became necessary, since some things had changed both in the Congregation and in Swiss law. After the voting on the revision of the statutes, the society as a whole is called "Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross Ingenbohl". The Society Meeting takes place every two years - on the occasion of a Provincial Superiors' Congress or a General Chapter.

*Founders' Writings:* The working committee formed after the 2008 General Chapter, presents its work up to now. It has prepared 200 letters from our founders for publication: Short, long, personal, complicated, letters to sisters, to church and other authorities. It still remains open what is to be done with the remaining 840 letters.

*Human trafficking:* Since 2011, the International working committee has been focusing mainly on the issue of women trafficking and

reporting about it to the provinces and vicariates. In the future, it aims at integrating this into the larger problem area of human trafficking.

November 25 becomes a dedicated memorial day against human trafficking for the entire congregation.

A prayer network will be created to support the sisters on the forefront.

Each province/vicariate appoints a person responsible for the issue on human trafficking.

*House in Rome:* Since the occupation of the house is not secured in terms of personnel, the future of the property is transferred to the discretion of the General Leadership.

*Restructuring of the India Central Province:* Inspired by the General Leadership during the visitation, the Provincial Leadership and the entire Province have been involved in a process of change with the aim of erecting two independent provinces, each having its own Provincial House.

*Distribution of financial resources:* The provinces and vicariates report to the foundation "Maria Theresa Scherer Ingenbohl" about projects that need financial support. The Foundation Board prepares a list of priorities.

All administrations also have the possibility of contributing appropriate financial resources to the foundation.

Note: In order to make the best use of donations, the Foundation "Maria

Theresa Scherer Ingenbohl" was established in 2013.

*Guidelines for the maintaining the archives:* Need and necessity indicate the need for having common rules and directives at the Congregational level for maintaining the archives. Such guidelines for archive should be drafted by a working committee appointed by the General Leadership.

*Guidelines in case of a sister leaving the Congregation:* The General Leadership is assigned to prepare guidelines in this regard together with a working committee and to present them during the Provincial Superiors' Congress in 2016.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter met in Ingenbohl from July 7 to August 7. At the beginning, as usual, there was a retreat for the 58 chapter members to "spiritually orient oneself to the events of the chapter". The decisions were preceded by a process of "decision-making by faith". In this way, the chapter became "tangibly a spiritual event". Each chapter is also marked by the rich liturgies, by community experiences, by unity in spirit and by the diversity of our worldwide community.

Since a longer construction phase for the retirement and nursing home is planned in Ingenbohl, the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter will take place - if the circumstances permit - from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2021 in the Franciscan House Altötting, Germany.

## Superiors General

The years refer to the terms of office



Mother M. Theresa Scherer 1857-1888  
(part of painting)



Mother M. Pankratia Widmer 1888-1906



Mother M. Aniceta Regli 1906-1921



Mother Theresia Beck 1921-1933



Mother M. Agnes Schenk 1933-1941



Mother M. Diomira Brandenberg 1942-1954



Mother Elena Giorgetti 1954-1966



Mother M. Edelfrieda Haag 1966-1978



Sister Gertrud Furger 1978-1996



Sister Louise-Henri Kolly 1996-2008



Sr. Marija Brizar 2008-

## Theodosius Academy of the Hegne Convent Foundation, as Answers to a Need of the Time

The present Education Department, House Francis and House Ulrika of Hegne convent have been brought together under the new roof of the Theodosius Academy. On February 14, 2020, the Theodosius Academy was solemnly opened in the convent church Hegne.

Sr. Benedicta-Maria Kramer, member of the governing body of the Foundation of Hegne Convent, and Markus R. T. Cordemann, Director of the Theodosius Academy, explain in an interview what is the purpose of this new foundation.

### **Do you serve your customers old wine in new wineskins from 2020?**

#### **Sister Benedicta-Maria:**

Oh no! But to stay in the image: Old wine is known to be matured, with its taste developed and very precious - new wine is sparkling, smart and still in change and development. You will find both in the "new wineskin" of the Theodosius Academy: Confident, familiar and a lot of openness for



Sr. Benedicta-Maria Kramer and Mr. Markus R.T. Cordemann

new things and the needs of the time.

Fundamentally, however, this restructuring and re-founding is based on a large and spiritual organizational development process that we sisters initiated about seven years ago. In doing so, the existential question was: How do we maintain the convent Hegne as a

characterized and spiritual place, where we have been for 125 years, if in the future only a few sisters will live in Hegne? Our response to this was the establishment of the Hegne Convent Foundation in 2018. With it, we have laid the foundation stone for ensuring that the mission of our community can continue so that it may be accomplished and developed in the future in a spiritually sound, professionally competent and economically sustainable manner - in care, accommodation, accompaniment and, of course, also in formation.

**Markus R. T. Cordemann:**

For us, this means in concrete terms: We combine competencies, strengths and resources from the entire convent in order to effectively fulfill the mission of the Holy Cross sisters and the purpose of the Foundation Convent Hegne. In doing so, we see ourselves as professional companions, educational and cultural institutions for the people who come to us and for the employees in the works and facilities at Hegne convent. New tasks, bundled competencies and continuous development: We also

want to express these changes with our new name.

**How did this choice of name come about?**

**Sister Benedicta-Maria:**

Father Theodosius Florentini is the founder of our community. His principle - "The need of the time is the will of God" - still inspires our actions today. With his name we therefore associate the claim that the Academy recognizes the needs of the time and finds answers to them. For this, it is necessary to have dialogue with the people and social institutions.

**Markus R. T. Cordemann:**

In addition, we associate with our name given the rootedness in the Christian faith and the Franciscan spirituality. Both were the basis for Father Theodosius' special and varied commitment, and both belong to the foundation of our academy. Academy does not mean academic or detached, but rather well-founded and quality adult education that is close to everyday life and spiritual, experiential and at the same time innovative.

We see our academy as a place of learning, encounter, discussion and faith, which we want to imbue with life and ideas together with course participants, visitors, our resource persons and many other people.

### **Sister Benedicta-Maria:**

Father Theodosius and his work also include the fact that he positively changed the society and the world on the basis of his Christian image of man. This is therefore also a concern of our academy: to encourage people to shape their own life and that of society as well in a value-oriented and humane way.

**"Simply different" is the motto of the Theodosius Academy. What do we propose by it?**

### **Markus R. T. Cordemann:**

Our motto "Simply different." reflects many things that make us different. On the one hand, it is our diverse offer, which not only includes seminars, but also offers of counselling and accompanying,

cultural events and various opportunities to experience the convent Hegne.

On the other hand, it is also our so-called Ulrika Apostolate that makes us different. This is an area of our Academy that has the mission to carry out the message of Sister Ulrika Nisch, who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1987, to treasure her memory, to care for the pilgrims who come to her crypt and, above all, to have an open ear for the people who come with their worries and needs.

Our place is also different, because we are part of the Hegne convent. By this I mean the whole, the community of sisters, the various works and institutions, the Foundation Hegne Convent. Together with them, we as the Theodosius Academy would like to participate in ensuring that this place remains a different place, a distinct place.

All this and much more make us "simply different".

## Corona

Beyond our grasp,  
the events of our times.

Sureties of the past, no longer relevant,  
we assumed they'd stand by us;

reduced to the minimal,  
the props of the past no longer hold up;

adversity confronts us to,  
confront challenges concertedly

existential imperatives,  
brooks no tarrying,

avoidance being not an option,  
we own up our actions or lack thereof.

Sentient life is the daily demand,  
course correcting repeatedly,  
keeping clear eyes to possibilities,  
never tiring of striving,  
extending a sensitive hand to the other,  
remaining open to the inevitable,  
but keeping faith,  
that we will endure.

Max Feigenwinter  
In: Poems - and even this...

## Information from the General Leadership

### Appointments

Sr. M. Monika  
Hutter

**On May 28, 2020**, the General Leadership has appointed a new Provincial Leadership of Czech Province for the next three years:

Official start: October 31, 2020  
(corona on 19 November)

Provincial Superior: Sr. Daniela Švecová for the 1<sup>st</sup> term  
Assistant: Sr. Tobia Mat jková  
Councillors: Sr. Bernarda Lacinová  
Sr. Iris Pavelková  
Sr. Emanuela Vévodová

### Thank you very much!

We sincerely thank the outgoing Provincial Superior Sr. Miroslava Bortlová, as well as the outgoing Councillors Sr. Agata Davidová and Sr. Zuzana Maceková of the Province Czech Republic and the outgoing Provincial Councillors Sr. Matthia Honold, Sr. Reto Lechmann and Sr. Maria Hollenstein of Switzerland Province, for their loyal and dedicated service for the good of the sisters and the province.

Official start: December 8, 2020

**On July 8, 2020**, the General Leadership has appointed a new Provincial Leadership of Switzerland Province for next three years:

We wish them all the best and God's abundant blessings for their future task.

Provincial Superior: Sr. Tobia Rüttimann for the 2<sup>nd</sup> term  
Assistant: Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönenberger  
Councillors: Sr. Eva Teresa Zanier  
Sr. Dorothea Jaros

We express our heartfelt thanks to the newly appointed and reappointed sisters of the Provincial Leadership of the Czech Republic and Switzerland for their readiness to accept this demanding mission.

We wish them strength, courage and confidence for the task.

May God's blessings accompany them!

Quarterly  
of the Sisters of Mercy  
of the Holy Cross  
Institute Ingenbohl  
CH-6440 Brunnen

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