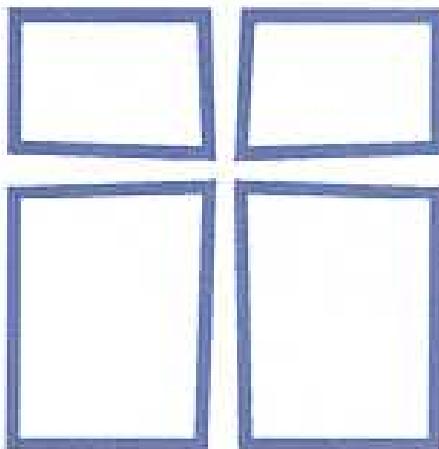


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# *Theodosia*

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

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"Only the prayers can still succeed..." Reinhold Schneider. Auguste Rodin, "La Cathédrale", 1908, Museum Rodin, Paris

## Editorial

While reflecting on the present time, the image of the sculpture "La Cathédrale" by François-Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) emerged in my mind. The two hands want to embrace each other and their arrangement reminds of praying hands, or pointed arches of a cathedral. Spontaneously, I reminisced the beginning of a poem by Reinhold Schneider (1902-1958), which he wrote in difficult times (1936):

"Only the prayers can still succeed  
to stop the sword above our heads  
and to wrest this world from the judging powers  
through a sanctified life."

Images and words accompany us on the journey through the special time that challenges us, but will pass. For this edition, the Theodosia has collected very different texts.

At the celebration of 40 years of profession in the Motherhouse on August 8, Fr. Emmeram Stacheder, OFM, spoke from the heart and to the hearts of those present in his homily in the background of the Elijah text: "Where Do We Go from Here?"

Sister Claire-Françoise Besse, General Councilor from 1978-90, died in Fribourg during Easter week. We remember her gratefully as we read her obituary, "Remembering Sister Claire-Françoise Besse".

Over the past ten years, the working committee against human trafficking has contributed in various ways to create awareness among the sisters and has sought opportunities for networking. The needs of the times called for a new structure to respond to new concerns. Sr. Anna Affolter reviews with her contribution and looks forward to the "SCSC Network against Human Trafficking".

Sr. Tresa Paul shares her journey, her motivation and her experiences as an advocate for women: "For the Rights of Women and Children".

After more than 70 years, the sisters of the Province Slovakia get "A New House for Our Aged and Sick Sisters". In 1947 the sisters were

expelled from their provincial house and dispossessed. After long trials, they were allowed to "return home" in the spring. Sr. Terézia Benedikta Majerčáková from the Province Slovakia opens some pages of the history of the Province for us.

One can now also meet Blessed Sister Ulrika Nisch on a pilgrimage route. "The Opening of the Ulrika Pilgrimage Route" was a highpoint for many people who helped to create it. Sr. Benedicta-Maria Kramer introduces it to us in her homily during the inauguration.

Sr. Pam Comack, Sr. Joelle Mauer, Sr. John Marie Simien, three former teachers from the USA province, recall after years of "Experiences with People of Other Skin Colors".

We are all affected by the Corona pandemic. In response to a request, many sisters have sent us "Personal Experiences during the Corona Period". We are glad to share them with you all in this and the next Theodosia.

We continue the series: "You will be My Witnesses". As a witness of our time, Sr. M. Fabiola Jung from the Province Switzerland meets us today with her rich experience. With 99 years of life and 73 years of profession, she is the senior sister of the province.

The "Information from the General Leadership" has become extensive due to the appointment of several Provincial Leaderships in the last weeks. For well-known reasons, this was mostly done online. In addition, the Treasurers experienced the first online conference. We are also made aware of major changes in the USA Province, of which detailed reports will follow later.

Sr. Christiane Jungo

## Where Do We Go from Here?

Fr. Emmeram Stacheder OFM, Rector ecclesiae, Ingenbohl

Three sisters celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> jubilee of profession during the Sunday Mass of August 8 (19<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the cycle B). Each of the readings touched on the concerns of everyday life, but more importantly, they provided encouragement by the surprises of God through his angel, through his companionship, and, through the signs of the word and bread. Indeed good news! Fr. Emmeram gave the homily.  
Reading: 1 Kings 19:4-8; Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

My dear sisters who are celebrating 40 years of profession today, and fellow sisters,

"It makes no sense at all!" Do you also get the feeling? The feeling of having struggled, of having made a commitment to a task, to a person, to a community, and of having accomplished little or nothing. Possibly there is also criticism for what you have done and how you have done it. Or the feeling of not being up to the task, of reaching one's limits. Not being understood that what's being asked, is beyond your capacity, and yet you have to do it, because others think that you are merely avoiding it out of laziness. This leads to discouragement and can sometimes make you depressed.

We can therefore understand Elijah, who is mentioned in the reading. Like him, we then ask ourselves: But how do we go forward? Can we proceed at all, and: can it continue as before? Can there not be a new beginning

that gives hope? Elijah has this further experience: God seems to have withdrawn. Elijah no longer feels him in his distress.

Interestingly, it is precisely in this situation that Elijah turns to God, whom he doubts and who, in his opinion, leaves him hanging in his life crisis. And yet: the same God hears him. Through an angel he gives him new strength - food - means to live - bread and water. Strengthening for body and soul. A new beginning has been made. Now the journey continues.

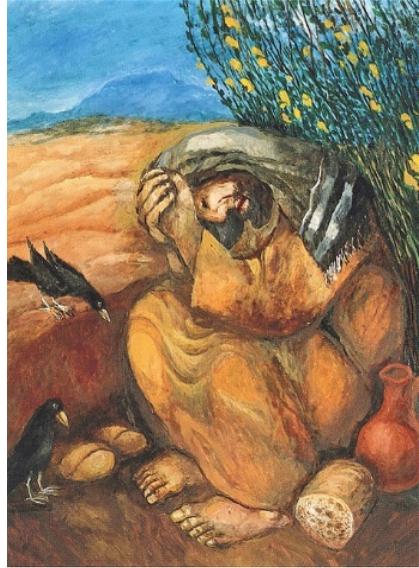
"Heaven sends you", we say, when we encounter such a rescuing angel in a person as Elijah. Besides the physical nourishment, it is above all the spiritual nourishment that is important: a good word, an encounter with people who encourage you, who are alert to the situation you are in. People who do not reproach you saying: "It's your own fault! I have often said so!" Such words are anything

but helpful and change nothing. This angel is simply present and has patience with Elijah. He knows what is important now and what is beneficial, so that the journey of life continues.

I recall the time of my studies in the monastery of Schwaz in Tirol. We had a sacristan in the community, brother Markus, who always encouraged me in strained situations when I wanted to give up. He said, "You didn't come for these fellow brothers, and because of them you are not to leave. You are here for someone who is important and that is what matters."

So when Elijah goes to Horeb, the mountain of God, it is the journey to the spiritual springs, where he meets the God who called and sent him.

Elijah's experience is paralleled in the Easter experience of the apostles, and other disciples, gathered in Jerusalem. The dialogues of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus reveal this. "But we had hoped ... and now this." In the form of the stranger, the "saving angel" approaches these two as well, giving them the bread of the Word and the Eucharist and thus initiating a new beginning for them. As he broke the bread, they recognized him.



"Elija under the broom tree" Sieger Köder, Bible illustration, 1 Kings 19

As they were on their way to Emmaus, they were also on their way to the spiritual springs, without knowing it. After this encounter with the Risen Lord, they set out strengthened and returned to their daily lives in Jerusalem. Elijah, too, returned from the mountain of God to his daily life, strengthened by the bread of the angel and the encounter with God on the mountain.

At the end, when we are burned out and exhausted, we can count on God working on a new beginning, even if we do not realize it yet, like Elijah, like the

two disciples to Emmaus. "Did not our hearts burn as he talked with us on the way?"

He offers himself to strengthen us: "I am the bread of life; the living bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." What an assurance! What a promise! He wants to be close to us in the form of bread. We experience this in the celebration of the Eucharist, in the Word of God, and in the sacrament.

Cardinal Meisner's private chalice depicts the scene of Elijah under the broom tree and the angel providing bread and water. A beautiful sign which can, and wants to give us strength always in the crises of life: the encounter with the Lord in word and sacrament.

Whether you, dear jubilarians, somehow recognize yourselves in what has been said, as far as the path of vocation and mission is concerned, I do not know. But one thing we all know is that the Lord accompanies us, cares for us and strengthens us, just like Elijah and the disciples at Emmaus. He meets us by sending us the saving angels, which we often fail in recognizing, or directly encountering us, like the disciples of Emmaus. This always makes a new beginning possible and gives a future to our lives for which it is worth standing up and continuing on the journey, like Elijah. Returning to everyday life is not always easy, like the disciples of Emmaus. This is what I wish you, dear jubilarians, and all of us. Amen.

## Remembering Sister Claire-Françoise Besse †

**Born:** 07.06.1930

**Professed:** 17.09.1953

**Died:** 31.03.2021

Marie-José was born in Valais village of Leytron as the fifth of seven girls. Her father worked in the Valais Cantonal Government and her mother was responsible for the well-being of the family. She liked to recount the family's cohesion through small celebrations, singing together and vacations in Ovronnaz. After her compulsory schooling, she learned German at the Leuk Institute and practiced household works. Here she got to know the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross.

On October 1, 1948, she entered the convent in Ingenbohl and completed her nursing training at the St. Clara Hospital in Basel. She then began her novitiate, and on September 17, 1953, Sister Claire-Françoise made her first profession. As a trained nurse, she then worked in the Viktoria Hospital in Bern, the Quisisana in Rome and the Cantonal Hospital in St. Gallen.

In 1970, she was appointed as Procurator in Rome and two years later was elected General



Sr. Claire-Françoise †

Councilor, and General Assistant in Ingenbohl. She assisted the then Superior General, Sister Gertrud Furger, in this office. Her work included accompanying her on her travels to the various provinces of the congregation. Sister Claire-Françoise witnessed the diverse worldwide activities of the sisters. The different areas of nursing, the great commitment to the needy, as well as the innumerable schools impressed her very much. Until the end, the sisters who knew her remained connected with her and remembered the loving encounters with her, her discretion and attentive listening.

After completing her term in the General Administration, Sister Claire-Françoise worked for three years at the home for the aged at Bleichenberg near Solothurn. In 1993, she moved to the Province of Western Switzerland, where she then worked in the community of the Diocesan Seminary in Fribourg. She was present with her whole being here as well. The former seminarians still share with us the impressions she left on them. Nicolas Glasson, the present Director of the Seminary said at the funeral service: "We will remember her as a woman, a religious with an amiable character, who inspired confidence and whose sympathetic listening made a great difference in the world around her. Concerned for others, sometimes anxious, she inquired about our welfare and as well as our families. She knew how to be grateful and how to ask for forgiveness. We noticed that she was very faithful in prayer and in her vowed life."

Sister Claire-Françoise had a large heart. She loved her Valais, her native place, as well as the whole Congregation. Pope John

Paul II said at the beatification of Mother Theresa: "The more her interior life grew, the more she was attentive to the needs of the world." This quote is equally true of the life of Sister Claire-Françoise.

Even in retirement, which she spent since 2012 in the Provincial House in Fribourg, she was concerned about the needs of the world and time. In 2020, she began the last stage of her life. In prayer and in her devotion to the Crucified, Sister Claire-Françoise prepared herself for his coming. During Holy Week, the Risen Lord called her to himself in the Father's house.

Dear Sister Claire-Françoise, after a richly fulfilled life, the Lord has called you to Himself. With great love and with your entire being, you dedicated yourself throughout your life to the charism of our Congregation. Your discreet and loving manner, and spiritual depth will remain alive in our memory, together with deep gratitude for your being and works in the service of our worldwide community.

## From the Working Group to the SCSC Network against Human Trafficking - a New Structure

**Sr. Anna Affolter, General Councilor, Ingenbohl**

The General Chapter 2008 energized the concerns of women and human trafficking. Using the suggestions of the working group, the topic gained worldwide foothold in our communities. Once the works on the grass roots were appointed in all the provinces and vicariates to be active according to the situation and level had been done, new needs called for a new structure. As a result of a search process, the working committee was followed by the "SCSC Network against human trafficking", which is presented to us today.

### Call for a new structure

Since May 2011, the Working Committee against human trafficking has worked steadily, enthusiastically and solidly to implement the Chapter Decision of the General Chapter 2008. It sought for ways to create awareness among the sisters, looked for possibilities of networking among the provinces and vicariates as well as other organizations and institutions, and explored possibilities of concrete action. Thus, at their suggestion, representatives were appointed in all the provinces and

vicariates to be active according to the situation and possibilities. Furthermore, the working group has initiated and implemented two Congregation-wide projects: the Memorial Day of November 25 and the Prayer Network with the Newsletter. New apostolates have been created in provinces and vicariates.

With the conference, "Stand for Human Dignity", in the autumn of 2017, the first meeting of all



Present working group: Sr. Elsit Ampattu, Sr. Verena Bergmair, Sr. Anna Affolter, Sr. Klára Marie Strániková, Sr. Eva Teresa Zanier, Sr. Gabriella Légrádi

representatives, the congregation-wide work against human trafficking has entered a new phase. It was clearly expressed that the value and content of the work done so far must be safeguarded, and that the projects initiated should continue. The representatives also expressed their desire for more exchange as well as wider and more intensive networking and cooperation. The question arose as to what form and structure could be used to continue and further develop what had been started. The time seemed ripe to continue the work done by the working committee in a different and permanent structure. The General Leadership has taken over from the conference the mandate to work on these questions.

### **The way towards a new structure**

In a workshop led by Mrs. Magda Emerich-Scholliers, who also moderated the conference, the General Leadership reflected on the form or structure in which the initiatives on human trafficking could be continued at the Congregational level. In the process, it became clear that the working committee had completed the task assigned by the General Chapter 2008, and it could be dissolved. At the same time, the General Leadership incorporated suggestions from the Conference and the Working Committee and drafted a proposal for a "new structure". In the preparation for the Provincial Superiors Congress 2018, the Provincial and Vicariate Superiors discussed the proposal with their

representatives and presented their opinions, questions, etc. at the Congress. The proposal was positively received and adopted as a future model of how issues could be addressed in the Congregation.

That is how the "SCSC Network against human trafficking" was born.

### **Model SCSC network against human trafficking**

The new structure is as follows:

- Each province/vicariate has an anti-human trafficking **representative** as at present.
- The continents, where we are working in several countries, form together a **continental group** with a **continental group leader**: continental group Europe and continental group Asia. Representatives who are on their continent as "individuals" can join one of the continental groups, depending on their language or similar problem areas.
- The General Leadership is involved with a **General Councilor**.
- The continental group leaders and the General Councilor form the **steering committee**.

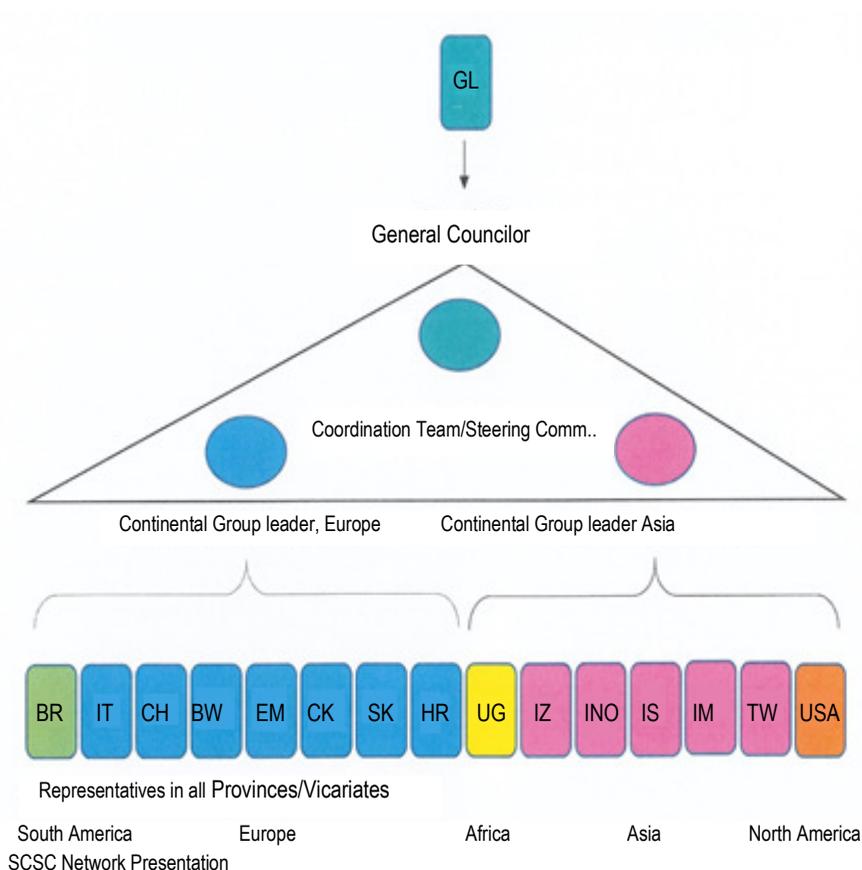
## The Expected outcome

With the new structure of the SCSC network, benefits are hoped for at various levels:

- The work and joint projects are anchored in the whole of the congregation.
- The particular issues of the respective continents are in the focus; the participants decide what they want to do together as

representatives of the respective continent and the issues they want to work on.

- In the continental group, the representatives get to know each other better; shorter and more direct channels are created than through the working group.
- Better networking on the continent: among the representatives, with other organizations, in terms of information, and exchange.



- Local and personal autonomy remains; each representative can be in contact with everyone.
- The General Councilor is unburdened.

### **SCSC network in concrete terms**

Until the steering committee was formed and handing over could take place, the working committee was ready to continue the tasks. In June 2019, the members of the working committee met in Pilisborosjenő/Hungary for a last meeting: Sr. Elsit Ampattu, Sr. Verena Bergmair, Sr. Gabriella Légrádi, Sr. Klára Marie Stráníková, Sr. Eva Teresa Zanier and Sr. Anna Affolter as organizer and moderator. The purpose of the meeting was to look back, to evaluate the path taken, to wish the steering committee well, and to say goodbye.

Sr. Elsit and Sr. Anna thanked the working committee once again on behalf of the entire General Leadership for their great commitment, and thanking them for the fact that the theme "against human trafficking", and "for human dignity", is now anchored in the entire Congregation and will remain alive with the new structure. As a token of gratitude and wish for good protection on the way, each sister receives an angel.

The General Administration appointed Sr. Anna Affolter, General Councilor, Sr. Dhanam Mary, IS/Continental Group Leader Asia, and Sr. Gabriella Légrádi, EM/Continental Group Leader Europe, as the steering committee.



Steering committee SCSC-Network, from left to right: Sr. Dhanam Mary, Sr. Anna Affolter, Sr. Gabriella Légrádi

In the autumn of 2019, the steering committee met for the first time for a three-day meeting in Ingenbohl. It dealt intensively with the mission, hopes and fears, the objectives, the new roles, the future of the already existing projects, and further procedure both in the steering committee and in the continental groups, and discussed the working methods of the steering committee. Since then, the steering committee held several Skype meetings.

In the future, the newsletter for the Prayer Network will be written alternately by one of the two continental groups; it is up to the leader to decide how to proceed

and the focus of action for the sisters who help. At the request of the General Leadership, the newsletter will be sent to all the communities, whether they are members of the prayer network or not; it is an opportunity for any sister who wishes to do so to be in touch with the subject.

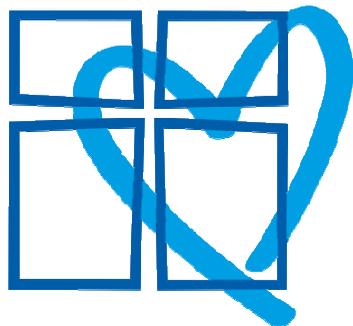
Input material for November 25, Memorial Day against Human Trafficking at the Congregational level, is prepared alternately by one of the continental groups and made available to all representatives. Last year it was the continental group India; this year Europe continental group is responsible for it.

The representatives have now all been assigned to one of the two continental groups (see illustration above). The continental group leaders have made contact with the representatives and held initial Skype meetings. The feedback from both groups was positive. They appreciated that an exchange was possible in this way. They would like to continue this and have a continental group meeting through Skype several times a year.

In the joint work in the SCSC network that we all form, we would like to be guided by a vision-

mission statement throughout the congregation and thus strengthen our bond in standing for human dignity. The steering committee has drafted a proposal. In a consultation process, the representatives and the General Leadership have given their opinion on it. The final wording has been approved by the General Leadership. In the near future, the representatives will make the vision known to all the sisters in the way that is appropriate for each province.

I hope and wish that the new structure of our commitment to human dignity will find the continued support of the sisters and be an effective witness in the world today.



Our Logo - anti-human trafficking. Design: Sr. Gielia Degonda

# **In the Footprints of Mother Maria Theresa Scherer - for the Rights of Women and Children**

**Sr. Tresa Paul, India North East Province**

Inspired by the charisma of Mother M. Theresa Scherer, Sr. Tresa dedicated herself working for the betterment of women. As a lawyer, she fights daily, and in many ways, for the rights of women and children.

## **Formative experiences**

A week of Para-legal training with the title "Empowering Women to Lead Change" was over at Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. All the participants started to say bye one by one. As I was about to leave the seminar hall, one slender and soft-spoken participant approached me. She said, "Sister, can I talk to you a minute?" and I said "Sure, what would you like to talk to me about?" She literally took my hand in hers and said, "I liked the training and it has helped me to increase my self-confidence" I saw her eyes welling up with tears. I asked her "are you worried about something?" What she told me next shook me as never before. She shared with me her heart-breaking story; how her own partner deserted her and how she became a victim of rape at the hands of many men not once but for few years. As I struggled for words to comfort her, she continued "Sister, your class has given me a new confidence, you

have helped me to recognize my dignity and so I am grateful to you." Her words of determination to start her life again a new was the best reward I received from that training. Yes, as an advocate cum- social activist, every encounter of mine particularly with women from poor and marginalized sector has been an experience of what that simple and great woman called Blessed Mother Maria Theresa Scherer invited all of us for; "Discover the grain of gold that lies hidden in every person's heart."

I got attracted to the personality of Blessed Mother Theresa particularly during my novitiate life where I became clearer of my vocation as revealed to me in the words of this great Mother, "Simply go the way of the Lord, seek nothing extra-ordinary." Perhaps this was beginning of my missionary vocation and route map for my life's further journey

as a Holy Cross Sister. I must say that this inner conviction helped me to make a preferential option for the poor. Thus, my initial exposure to rural villages in and around Patna in the State of Bihar gave me deeper insights about various social realities, particularly about the struggles of the poor to have equality, human dignity, fraternity and unity as has been guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

As a Holy Cross Sister, with a Charism of compassion within, I felt invited to work amidst these social realities. My graduate studies in Social Work, helped me to begin with different empowerment programme for women and youth. I organized women at the grass-root level and enable them to be active agents of their development process. The journey was tough, but these years of social action gave me a deeper social awareness as it existed in the society. I came across many women denied of basic education, beaten by husbands, victims of sexual harassment and domestic violence, denied of property rights, ostracized because of superstitious beliefs, dowry-related violence etc., I recall the story of Madhu (name changed). She was dumb by birth and was married to an upper middle class

man of the village. She was married only for bearing a child to him as his first wife couldn't bear him a child. A son was born to him in Madhu. But she was separated from her own son immediately after the birth. They treated her like their servant and tortured her for every small thing. Yes she was a victim of domestic violence at the hands of her own. My one month stay in her house was a happy time for Madhu as she was spared from daily torture and abuse.

On the one hand, I was disturbed and challenged, but on the other hand, the social realities around me helped me to realize that in India, the status of women is not different from the rest of the world. On the one hand, she is worshipped and on the other, she is tortured, raped and murdered. On the one hand, a liberalized economy has offered her better education, jobs, decision-making powers and opportunities for women. On the other hand, women have been targets of a strong backlash with increased violence in and outside the home, acute wage differentials and discrimination and continuing commodification in society. In many regions of the world, including India, women are still expected to endure wife battering by the husband. It is ingrained in

the social conditioning of the women that a wife is at the mercy of her husband and in-laws. The strength and weight of tradition is so acute that many women silently suffer physical torture and justify it as part of the tradition of the society. This culture of silence has gotten us rape, incest, abuse, institutional discrimination etc.

### **My life as advocate**

Little did I realize then, that my life and mission in the Congregation of Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross was gradually being influenced and shaped by the deep faith, tremendous courage, daring spirit and commitment of our own Foundress. It certainly played a great role in my discernment to become an advocate. Even though I knew that legal apostolate is challenging and very demanding one, I chose this ministry because I find it very close to the mission mandate of Jesus as revealed in Luke 4/18 "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed". Moreover, I find this Spirituality of the Gospel well reflected in the Constitution of India in its great values of justice,

equality, liberty, dignity, fraternity, unity and integrity.

Thus as an advocate, I was able to expand the horizons of my mission journey together with the people from all walks of life. Some of my work includes litigation in various Courts including the Supreme Court of India, legal interventions, rainings/workshops, publication, network, advocacy etc. I could get actively engaged in effectively addressing the human rights issues in particular of the poor, marginalized and vulnerable sections of the society through legal aid programme and in partnership with academicians, people's movements, human rights organizations and ecological movements etc.



Sr. Tresa Paul, advocate for women

My active involvement in sensitizing people at various levels on various legal issues such as rights of women, children, victims of human-trafficking, minorities, Dalits, Tribals, persons with disabilities etc help me to become a better witness of the Gospel in today's world, be it in a slum or in an organizational set up, be it for the rescue of victims of human trafficking or for the capacity building of women and children. In the words of Blessed Mother Theresa, we hurry to anywhere where human need calls us to be. I had an experience of this sort in the riot-hit areas of New Delhi, last year. From 24-27 February 2020, the Capital City of India bore witness to horrors of extreme communal violence. The riot and the heartbreaking stories of violence affected anyone with a sensitive heart. It affected me too and I couldn't resist my inner urge to see and get affected by the heartbreaking stories of the victims of violence caused by the riot. So I was able to be part of a team, to visit the riot-hit areas for assessing the post-riot rehabilitation works along with various other organizations that were already working under the local Government. Every visit was a horrible and terrifying experience in every way; totally and partially burnt houses, shops, worship places, families that have

lost their sole breadwinners, hundreds of children and women who became homeless etc., and looking for someone to share their sorrow. Yes these few visits helped me to carry the smell of the charred houses, shops and pain of injuries and wounds into my prayer for healing and peace.

### **No more silence**

The stories of many women I came in contact with had tremendous impact on my life and thoughts. I was moved by their courage to draw power from pain and to move ahead in life making significant contributions in the society. The thoughts and feelings they had entrusted to me left me with a deep sense of responsibility. I could translate this responsibility in the form a book titled "No more Silence" Countering Sexual Harassment and Violence against Women. This book published in the year 2016, is intended to spread awareness and also to speak out against violence against women. Subsequently, I was also able to simplify few other laws of the Country and publish them in the form of book-lets for the benefit of common man. Some of these book-lets include, law relating to Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection), Food Security, rights of the minorities, environmental

protection, Disaster Management etc. Being part of various Governmental and non-Governmental Forums, provide me with many opportunities to speak for the rights of the poor and the marginalized. A few years of my engagements as Child Safeguarding officer for Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS, India) give me many opportunities to contribute for promoting and safeguarding of the dignity of children and vulnerable adults.

Through, my apostolic involvement as a socially conscious advocate, I am deeply convinced that it is our vocation to be committed God seekers who have imbibed the qualities of prophetic critique of unjust structures and principalities; standing for truth and justice, even when no one else does. "Our founders recognized the call of God in the needs of the time. With unbounded confidence in God's mercy, almighty power and

fatherly goodness they were open to the needs of the people, courageous and active in responding and persevering in fidelity. Their lives and examples give us inspiration and courage as we strive to follow Christ. I believe that, following the example of our Founders, we are called upon to read the signs of the social situation of our society in the light of God's will and to re-read our Charism of "compassionate love to all especially for the underprivileged" through the optic of the poor today.

I feel proud to be a daughter of Blessed Mother Theresa Scherer and Fr. Theodosius, who left behind us a great Spiritual legacy and a rich Charism of extraordinary social consciousness, manifested in compassion for the suffering humanity in particular and to respond to it courageously in line with our motto "The need of the time is the will of God".

## **A New House for Our Aged and Sick Sisters**

**Sr. Terézia Benedikta Majerčáková, Province Slovakia**

Few provinces have such an eventful history as the Province Slovakia, but God was constantly present there, as the sisters experienced. After more than 70 years, in the spring of 2021, they were able to "return home" to Podunajske Biskupice, the place from where they had been expelled from and dispossessed by the communist regime in 1947. Let us rejoice with them!

### **A Glimpse into the History of our Province**

God leads us in different ways. The history of our Province is also named, "Against all hope". And we continue to write it. Not only on paper, but for eternity. The Lord has a different time than we humans. With amazement and awe we witness to a very special event in our Province. Our sisters are moving from the Charity House in Cerová to their own Marianum House in Podunajske Biskupice. We are returning to this place after 100 years. This is the place marked by great suffering and injustice, but also by many blessings and graces.

After the foundation of the Republic of Czechoslovakia in 1918, our sisters separated from the Province of Hungary (to which they had belonged). As their numbers grew, they wanted to become a province of their own. Mother Theresa Beck, the then Superior General, decided to buy the "stone fort" with the garden in Podunajske Biskupice from Count

Dražkovič for this purpose. She herself contributed 10,000 Swiss francs in 1922.

Gradually, the sisters moved there. At the same time they renovated and made other buildings necessary for life and the mission. The chronicle records the memories of Sr. Justina Bartonova, the cook: "In March 1922, according to the instructions of our Superiors, we were distributed to various places to work in Slovakia. I was assigned to Podunajske Biskupice. There was nothing there except an



Convent in Biskupice 1945

empty fort. Old, but beautiful! So it had to be furnished first. In autumn, the house was ready to receive the new members. But the construction continued. On one side, the building for the novitiate, on the other, the building for the Postulancy. Everyone who had a little strength in her hands helped. Sometimes we received a little financial or material help from outside which we gratefully accepted.

On November 19, 1927, the General Leadership established the Province Slovakia. Sr. Teodosia Hossová was appointed as the first Provincial Superior. The beginning of the new province was affected by great poverty. However, the number of sisters in the Provincial House continued to grow. In 1947, the Provincial Leadership decided to build a church and a house for the elderly and sick sisters.

Shortly thereafter, the communist regime took power, religious congregations were banned, the sisters were deported to the forced camps in the Czech Republic or transferred to houses for the mentally retarded in Slovakia, and all the property of the sisters was nationalized. The church and the house for the old and sick sisters were still under construction at that time. In



Sanatorium 1952

Podunajske Biskupice the liquidation took place in the night of August 22, 1950. The sisters were deprived of everything they had built up over so many years. However, no one could rob them of their charism and fidelity to Christ, as one of the sisters wrote.

In 1968, ("Prague spring") the sisters came back to Slovakia. Our buildings in Podunajske Biskupice were then a renowned hospital for tuberculosis patients. So a return to this place was out of the question. Instead, they were offered an old fort in Cerová, which they made livable with their own hands. They also constructed another building. Unfortunately, this place was never given to the sisters as their property. So the sisters remained there on rent until today. It is now owned by the Catholic Charities of Slovakia.

After the fall of the communist regime, the Provincial Leadership of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross demanded the restitution of our property in Podunajske Biskupice. It seemed impossible at first because the hospital was still there. But then the church was returned to us first, which was consecrated in 1992. After the beatification of Sr. Zdenka in 2003, her relics were transferred to that church.



New house 2021

In 2017, after long legal proceedings, we finally got back the buildings and part of the land. The construction and renovation of a house for the elderly and sick sisters, the Marianum began on November 19, 2018. Actually, the house that was already planned for this purpose in 1947 was now built. Despite the pandemic, it was completed in 2021, and the sisters of Cerová could gradually move in.



Sisters in new Marianum

### **The beginnings in the new house**

At the beginning of March 2021, during the hard lockdown, the first six sisters could move in to prepare the place for our aged and sick sisters.

Then began the first big stage of moving from Cerova, namely the elderly and sick sisters with their caregivers. This required a lot of feeling, and human and spiritual support. All the sisters survived the change well. It was touching to see the sisters, who first lived their religious life here 70 years ago, in wheelchairs in the courtyard of the Marianum.

Sr. Gizela describes it this way: "I consider it a great gift and grace of God that I am here in this place where I first joined as a candidate in 1947. I joined at the time, when the construction of the church had already begun. My loving parents had supported the work. In the face of the difficult times of persecution in the totalitarian regime the Church construction could not be completed, and I am here today to pray with the Psalmist: "I was full of joy when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the Lord." (Ps 122:1)

### **Moved by God's Spirit, going forward with courage**

The arrival of the sisters in Podunajske Biskupice is an invitation to continue in trust, and always believe in God's

mysterious plans for us. We may return to our roots. We may experience that the Lord completes His work in spite of human obstacles. We may experience that sooner or later, good will triumph.

Returning to this place also has a dimension of a pilgrimage. The Provincial House Church is the main place of veneration of Blessed Sr. Zdenka in Slovakia. Her relics are kept in this place. Here, in the spirit of our charism, we want to be close to the people and create a spiritual place.

The landscape design of the park, and the renovation of another building are still in progress: Sr. Zdenka's house, which will provide a spiritual home for pilgrims and the lonely.



Moving in of the first sisters in March 2021



Sr. Gizela entered Biskupice as candidate in 1947. Now she could come back.

The whole process of our return to Podunajske Biskupice was accompanied by great support from our sisters and benefactors. We would like to express our gratitude to our General Leadership, the sisters from different provinces, especially the sisters from the USA, for the great material and spiritual support.

Dear Sisters, we thank you for being with us on this new path. The motto of the General Chapter "Moved by God's Spirit, going forward with courage" has taken concrete shape in our Province Slovakia.

Translated into German by  
Fr. Timotej Masar SJ

## Experience with People of Other Skin Color

**Sr. Pam Comack, Sr. Joelle Mauer, Sr. John Marie Simien, Merrill,  
USA Province**

Three former with teachers share us different experiences in school, in the parish, and in public life. These are a few flashes into their past. For years, they experienced racial segregation to a greater or lesser extent. Regardless, they remained committed to equality and human dignity.

### Teacher in New Orleans



Sr. Pam Cormack

Growing up in northern Wisconsin I had very little experience with our black brothers and sisters. I had met a few (I could probably count them on one hand) but heard stories (some good and some bad) about the blacks.

When I heard about St. Benedict the Moor School in New Orleans I knew that this was a place that was meeting “the need of the

times” and something that I wanted to be involved with as a Holy Cross Sister. St. Benedict School was established and funded in 1998 by an anonymous donor to help the poor, especially black families, in New Orleans that wanted a Catholic education for their children but could not afford the tuition of the Catholic Schools in the area. Besides free tuition the children also receive free lunches and before and after school care. For each child to receive the individual attention they needed, the class size was limited to 15 students with a teacher and an assistant teacher in each classroom. The student population was 100 percent black with the staff composed of both whites and blacks.

When I accepted the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teaching position, I knew that I had a lot to learn about the black culture and that of New Orleans. I also needed to learn and put aside my own prejudices, biases,

and stereotypes, I put my heart into listening to and treating the students, parents and staff with respect. Throughout my years at St. Benedict's I felt accepted by the teachers, parents and students, and hope they mutually felt the same from me.

Here are a few of the questions and comments made by my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students that gave some insight in how they thought about themselves and me.

*"Sister Pam, how come they call us black? I'm not black, I'm brown."*

*"Sister Pam, how come your lips are so thin and ours are so fat?"*

The boys from my class loved to stand around me at my desk for extra help. While standing there they would often run their fingers through my hair. One day one of the boys said, *"Your hair feels just like dog hair."* Now I knew why they liked doing that.

One day a girl was telling us about how at her old school she didn't have many friends. She said the white girls wouldn't play with her. I told her that I was her friend at this school. She said, *"Sister, you aren't black?"* I said, *"No, but we can be friends."*

At the end of the day one girl came to say good night to me she said, *"Sister Pam, I'll give you a 'chocolate' kiss if you give me a 'vanilla' kiss."*

Another day I overheard some students having a discussion at the back of the classroom. One student said to another, *"Sister Pam's, black."* The other student said, *"No she isn't, she's Caucasian."*

### **Experiencing racial segregation**



Sr. Joelle Mauer

Our missions to the Negro poor (S. Maria Theresa's dream) began in Louisiana in 1951. There was discrimination in the north, but it was not upheld by law. Here there were signs which said WHITE and COLORED. In churches white persons occupied

the front pews; colored persons were in the last pews. In one of the seven church parishes (which we eventually served), because of the large number of black parishioners two congregations had been formed. The black people had Sunday Mass at 8:00 a.m., the small number of white wealthier parishioners had their own Mass. We attended the 8:00 a.m. Mass and developed a vested men's choir who sang the Latin Gregorian chant from the *Liber Usualis*.

"Separate but equal" was proclaimed for education, but it was far from equal. School buildings for whites were located prominently and were well-built edifices. Schools for the colored were often hidden in sugar cane fields or on back roads. Some were only 2-room shacks. Some of the teachers were Xavier University graduates who labored diligently despite the poor facilities and lack of resources.

Our mission was to teach the faith to the colored students grades 1 through 12. They had received very little instruction. We were allowed to teach in the schools

grade by grade throughout the day. When the white Catholics discovered how these children were being taught with graded texts, they realized that their own children, who got only memorization of catechism questions, were being short-changed. They were ready to invite the sisters to teach their children, too.

Unfortunately, it was at that very time, 1953, that the archbishop of New Orleans ordered that segregation in the churches was no longer to be observed. There was great rebellion by the white parishioners. We were asked to speak with the colored parishioners about it. They told us that they wished only to be able to occupy front pews, not next to white parishioners. So, all along our area parishes seated colored parishioners on one side, whites on the other side.

However, it had caused enmity for us among some of the white men. We received threatening phone calls and one day a school bus driver attempted to force us off the road. Our teaching of the white children had to be delayed.

There were still some families living in hovels on the sugar plantations, although others had built their houses along the street. Those were families whose men traveled up to 50 miles to work in the ship yards near New Orleans, the stores served people of both races. They, of course, were all owned by white people. In the large department stores in New Orleans, often outdated items, like furniture, were shown to colored people. With our direction, they avoided these ploys and were shown better things.

Colored women worked in white homes and were treated well. Naturally, they did not eat with the family. Colored were not served in restaurants either. However, colored wet-nurses had been common.

In the parish where we lived, we began to teach two colored boys how to serve Mass. Until now only whites served or sang in the choir. When the boys began to serve, all but two of the white servers quit. When the pastor promised that white and colored servers would never be scheduled together, they returned. One of the colored servers, Terry Steib,

became a priest and later was named bishop of Memphis, Tennessee!

Things have changed through the years and some parishes are now quite integrated. However, in the cities there are still parishes for colored and for white; however, persons of any race attend liturgies there.

### **Our God is a God of diversity**



Sr. John Marie Siemen

Our God is a God of diversity. In all of creation, there is diversity: in the landscape, in vegetation, in animals, in birds, and in humans. The human person, who is the image of God, cannot deal with diversity including human diversity.

God gave us one specific command—to love one another as God loves us. As I look around, it occurs to me that we misunderstood that commandment of love. We seem to interpret it as a command for competition—to be better than our neighbor and to be more intelligent than our neighbor. And those of us who are white seem to think that they are better than others and that they are God's favorite.

I can give an example. There was a woman who came to me and said, "Black people are moving into my neighborhood, so I must move out. I decided to test her and said, "When you get to heaven and you see black people there, will you tell God you don't want to come in because there are black people there?" Her response was, "I never thought of that."

The color of our skin makes it possible for us to survive in a particular environment. Those who live in the southern climates are darker skinned and have thicker hair so they can endure heat and sun. Those who live in more northern parts have lighter skin and finer hair. Some of us who are more "tan" or at least lighter make it confusing to some people. A former student called me Korean. So I kind of turned around and looked at him while he said, "There's nothing wrong with being Korean." I told him, "I did

not say that, you did!"

In the school where I taught, black and white kids played together until about the 6<sup>th</sup> grade when they reached the age of puberty. Possibly, the parents got involved and told their white children not to play with the black children.

In one other school where I taught, some black parents called the pastor to ask him if he would accept their children in school. Many were not Catholic. The pastor told the parents that their children could come to the school if they agreed that their children would attend all religion classes, attend Mass, and do everything that the other kids had to do at Mass. Then he would welcome them into the school. When the students were in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, they were to begin to serve at Mass. One Baptist little boy asked if he could also serve at Mass. So, Father gave permission for him to serve. But while the boy served at Mass, he decided to receive Communion like everyone else. Father came to tell the teacher that the boy could not receive Communion. So, I called the boy and told him that Father said he shouldn't go to Communion because he's not Catholic. The boy's response was, "You spent all this time telling me how good it is, and now you tell me I can't have it?" So, I told him to go ahead and receive Communion.

## Opening of the Ulrika Pilgrimage Route

### Sr. Benedicta Maria Kramer, Hegne Convent

During the Eucharistic Celebration in Mittelbiberach, the birthplace of Blessed Sister Ulrika (1882-1913), Sr. Benedicta-Maria Kramer introduced the new Ulrika pilgrimage route during the homily on May 16, 2021. With a total length of 124 km, this pilgrimage path leads in six stages from the home of the Blessed in Unterstadion in Upper Swabia to the convent Hegne. The new pilgrimage path was initiated and built as a joint project of the Theodosius Academy of the Foundation of Hegne Convent, the convent, and the association of friends of Sister Ulrika, Unterstadion.

#### Clarifying words in the sermon

Dear Reverend Reutlinger, dear guests,

First of all, thank you very much for your welcome and invitation to the Ulrika festival day in Mittelbiberach. I am so glad to share a little bit about the new Ulrika-Way.

What is your answer to the question: "**Why** was Sister Ulrika actually beatified? Why this simple woman from Mittelbiberach, who was a Holy Cross Sister in the Hegne convent, worked in the kitchen and died at the age of 31? Why is "such a person "blessed?"

The second question that is often asked: "What did she actually **do**?" It is somehow expected that she, for example, has founded a convent or a work, or that she has written important theological or spiritual books - just that she has done something! Today one must

be able to show something, to achieve something, to be able to present something, in order to be important, or to be beatified.

Jesus too was also asked: "What do you **do**?" He answered, "I am...". And Paul was asked (Acts 11:30), "What must I **do**...?" His answer is, "Believe...!" Apparently, doing and performing should not be just a phenomenon of our days.

What would Sister Ulrika say? She speaks a different language with her soft voice. Perhaps she would say: "I **am** simple!" or "I **just** am!" With her whole being she always found herself in the presence of God! In her intimate relationship with Jesus, in his immeasurable love anchored, lifted up and held, she could give herself wholeheartedly to God, to everyone and everything. Simplicity, humility and her loving presence radiated and touched people - even today.

Being touched - this is also at the beginning of our Ulrika - way. Again and again we asked ourselves how we can make the message of Blessed Sister Ulrika - this treasure - newly accessible and understandable for people in our time. How do we find new ways to people, also to people who no longer want to have anything to do with the Church, but who carry a great longing within themselves?

### **From the idea to the path**

Since ancient times, pilgrimage has been a way to get in touch with oneself and with God, with creation, with one's own longings, questions and hopes. This is how the idea of an Ulrika pilgrimage route came about: A few years ago I heard about a Dag Hammarskjöld path that was marked with boulders on which quotes from him were written. So I imagined that in this way also an Ulrika way would be feasible and I found open ears, enthusiasm and support for it from our former mayor and from the chairman of the Ulrika friends circle Unterstadion. Soon after the beatification of Sister Ulrika, the friends circle makes a big bicycle pilgrimage to Hegne every year, so the way seemed to be almost fixed.

A **project group** began to work on the idea, and soon we realized that it was not simply a matter of laying boulders along the path. In addition, the route of the Circle of Friends was on paved roads, and we had decided on a footpath in order to emphasize Sister Ulrika's simple way of being on the way.

Several **test hikers** first explored the path and, with a lot of time and commitment, searched for the paths that were also attractive for tourists. At the same time, I made personal contact with the mayors of the communities along the path, with the parishes and the tourist offices, in order to communicate our idea in advance and also to ask for advice and support. My fellow sisters would smile each time when I went on the "Mayor's Tour" and they were eager to listen to my sharing when I came



Ulrika way

home. Even though it took a lot of organization and time and was perhaps for some an unusual action for a religious sister, I am still happy about these encounters and the many contacts. Everywhere I could experience open ears and support.

At the same time, we continue to work on Sister Ulrika's **message**, on the "why" of the path. It is about "**simply more**". We put this as a motto on the path - simply more of life, of longing, of love, more of hope, of strength, of peace; it could be continued. Some of these thoughts, impulses and also quotes from Sister Ulrika can be read on the **steles** that are attached to the seven stage destinations. Here in Mittelbiberach, you will find Sister Ulrika's saying on them, "You have to close the stores." She



didn't mean the grocery stores that corona has now closed. She meant her personal relationship with Jesus, which needs space and attention inwardly, becoming still, listening and diving into one's own heart, finding support from the center.

For me, it is not a coincidence that the completion of the Way falls precisely in the Corona Pandemic, in this time of uncertainty, fear and confusion. Just now, when we have come to the limits of the "can-do", when we are looking for support, clarity and security, when the simple has become special and the self-evident has become precious, Sister Ulrika's message holds strengthening answers for all of us.

And once the six stages into which we divided the 124 km route between Unterstadion and Hegne had been clarified, the next step was to signpost the route. At first, our graphic designers created the very simple **logo**. They "played", as they said, with the first letters of the name Ulrika Nisch: **U** and **N** placed opposite each other make a cross, the rhombus in the middle symbolizes the center, the love out of which Sister Ulrika lived her life as a Holy Cross Sister. It was a very

special moment as the two young men presented their deep reflections to us.

In the process of signage, I am grateful that we have a former mayor in the project group, who is familiar with the laws and regulations, with district and forestry offices, with district boundaries, signage manuals and permit agreements.... We learned that we were making our way through six counties and far more municipalities than localities, and that there were many more people and boards that should also be informed and consulted. It was a time when, admittedly, I sometimes sighed with Sister Ulrika: "For the sake of the Savior!"

### From the path to the experience

Now the path is signposted, at least from Unterstadion to Hegne, and at the end of each stage there are the stele already mentioned. They are made of **Rohrschach sandstone** - deliberately chosen because Sister Ulrika recognized her vocation in Rorschach. Here, at her birthplace in Mittelbiberach,



Start in Unterstadion



Arrival in front of the crypt in Hegne

the surface of the stele is still smooth; in the course of the path, the steles are more and more worked, hewn, pointed, bush-hammered - signs of the experience that life also draws and shapes us in the course of life. This was also a new and interesting insight into the work of a stonemason.

In the week before 8 May, we have the Ulrika-way corona conditional now, in a small way handed over to the public, and it can be walked. We hope that next year from 01 - 08 May we can

officially inaugurate the path and celebrate a larger festival of encounter. Bishops from the diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart and the archdiocese of Freiburg have already promised to attend.

Finally, back to the initial question, "Why?" and "What do we need to do?" We are not Sister Ulrika and we cannot imitate her, we live our own daily lives, we have other joys, questions and challenges, but this is where she gives us her quiet but strong answer:

"Love knows no measure - we want to suffer and do everything in **love** and only for love."

## **Personal Experiences during the Corona Period Sisters from different provinces, and the Vicariate Brazil**

The editors of Theodosia have invited the sisters to reflect on their experiences during the Corona period upto the present. Since the submissions were numerous, we will divide them up in this, and in the next issue. The responses are based on the questions: "What does the Corona period teach me?" "What important experiences have I had to stay on the path courageously?" "What message do I want to share with everyone?" We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the sisters who have shared their reflections with us.

### **Covid Virus- the impact**

Sr. Genevieve D'Silva,  
Vicariate Superior Uganda

In 2019, when I heard of Corona Virus I went through moments of anxiety, worry, fear and uncertainty. The whole world is affected by its power and strength. It took away the lives of many young and old, rich and poor- A sad reality.

Having had some cough, on 10<sup>th</sup> June I went for Covid test and the result was positive which was unexpected. I started with the medication but the cough kept increasing. My blood sugar rose high. Being admitted in the hospital, the doctor started checking me. I heard him saying the Oxygen level is going down, blood sugar and pressure are

rising and the pulse rate is going down. At that moment I was very much afraid of what would happen to me. I surrendered myself into the hands of the Lord. I repeated these words, "Lord, if you want, you can heal me."

My blood sugar continued to rise for days. Hence I prepared myself to die by asking pardon and forgiveness from every one. The nurse had to try for a long time to get my vein to give the I.V. which gave me some physical strength. Oxygen Cylinder got exhausted. That was another shock. The doctor himself arranged for another one from a far away place.

I was consoled when I heard that my sisters in the congregation are praying for me. This increased my

trust and faith in the Lord. Somehow miraculously I was saved. My heart is full of gratitude to each and every one who accompanied me in this crucial time.

**Having gone through the corona period it has taught me to go forward with courage:**

- Life is a gift of God. We do not know how long or short it is. So respect oneself and others.
- To be in solidarity with the suffering humanity
- Belongingness to the Congregation and a community gives inner strength and hope
- I felt that in our vulnerability we are loved, cared and prayed for more than any other time
- The social nature of every human being has been put to stake
- Our faith is challenged, nourished and strengthened
- The service rendered by the health professionals is to be valued

**Message to share with every one:**

- Corona Virus is real, dangerous to our personal life and community life
- We need to put up with the period of corona virus and discover new ways of engaging

to make the best use of the time

- By worrying about the virus one can do nothing- my future is not in my hands
- This time of uncertainty calls us to live each day constructively

**A Tryst with Covid-19**

Sr. Jeyanthi Samy, India South Province

The sudden outbreak of Covid-19, its impact on human life and its attack on me personally left me bewildered, confused and frightened. Living through this period of Corona, I learned the preciousness of God's wonderful gift, the LIFE and its transitory nature. God alone has the ultimate control over LIFE. I learned complete abandonment to God's Will. The words of St. Francis rang in my ears, "We are only pilgrims and strangers" in this world.

I realized that I had special privileges as a religious fighting with this invisible virus. I had an individual room to quarantine, had a bed to lie down, have sisters to care for me. Medicines and food were delivered to me. This 'privilege' however stirred within

me a sense of guilt seeing hundreds of people helplessly searching for beds, struggling for food and no one to care for. My heart was filled with a mixed feeling of gratitude for what I have and guilt for what I could not do!

While the negative news of corona was heard all the time and everywhere, it was a challenge to remain positive and hopeful. Taking recourse to God in prayer and other spiritual activities, it became easier to experience a spirit of positivity. I could radiate the same to those who were infected through messages and calls .It was indeed inspiring to witness our sisters in Devala community, despite the danger of the pandemic, dared to reach out to those in need in varied ways. Though our sisters were infected and one had to be admitted in the hospital, we continued to be at the service of the people in the convent, dispensary and school.

The entire world was struggling to preserve Life and I was no exception. In this struggle, I experienced at every moment God's continuous presence and His compassionate care. Sisters

in my community were the instruments of God's compassion. They cared for me when I needed them the most. They were ready to make sacrifices.

I learned the vulnerability of humanity even with the advancement of Science and Technology. A vast majority turned to the Divine Intervention. The experience-of-God continues to nourish my faith.

This time of corona has taught me to value the life of everyone as much as mine, to be lovingly available to others and to care for the others genuinely.

### **Corona Pandemic - School of Life and Faith**

Sr. Ambrosia Schmerbeck, Gemünden convent, Province Europa Mitte

The months-long situation of the Corona Pandemic has awakened my consciousness. Nothing of the things that holds and sustains me, delights and sometimes makes me vibrate so pleasantly, is self-evident and safe. Although I, and no one else in my surroundings, have been infected by Covid-19, I feel myself in the midst of the

suffering of those affected. Powerlessness is the name of the fear I feel. With intense longing for good news, I sit in front of the television every evening. When is an end to the problem expected? When will we be able to live untrammelled, without fear of the virus? I pray for those directly affected, for doctors, for nursing staff and all those in positions of responsibility, for scientists and researchers, yes, and for myself for strength, patience, faith and trust in the one who holds the destinies of mankind in his hands: Kyrie eleison - Lord, have mercy.

## **Corona Period**

Sr. Renate Spittler, Vicariate Brazil

What does the Corona period teach me? The Corona period taught me patience, trust in God, and solidarity with all the people who were infected by this virus. I became more aware of my responsibility for the people around me and around the world, and I expressed it through the precautions I took and the prayers that accompanied me.

What important experiences have I had to courageously stay on the

path? At the beginning of the pandemic, I remembered my childhood during World War II: curfew and restrictions on many different levels. What strengthened me at that time was the common prayer in the family and the hope that a change would come. My father was released from Russian captivity in November 1949. This experience helps me in the present situation that we and our people have to go through at the moment. Prayer is the driving force for me to courageously stay on the path.

What message do I want to share with everyone? Recently I received a prayer from Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890) that so aptly speaks to our present situation: "O God, the time is full of distress, the cause of Christ lies as in agony. And yet Christ never strode more powerfully through earthly time, never was his coming more evident, never was his nearness more perceptible, never was his service more priceless than now. Therefore, in the sight of the Eternal, let us pray to You. O God, You can illuminate the darkness, You alone can." Amen.

## **Corona Period Experiences**

Sr. Maria Oßwald and Sr. Thomas Morus  
Güde, St. Anne, Hegne Convent, Baden-  
Württemberg Province

### **What does the Corona period teach me?**

I feel very grateful because up to now only one sister fell ill, but survived the Corona infection well. Otherwise, all the other sisters were spared - undeservedly. What a gift! Did Sr. Ulrika cause this to happen? Sr. Maria

When the restrictions of the Corona pandemic began, I was in Freiburg. There were only online masses, the church halls were empty except for a few participants, and I couldn't relate to them. Most difficult of all were Holy Week and Easter. I missed something very important, the common celebration of death and resurrection was missing. When I came back to Hegne and was able to participate in Holy Masses, the first feeling was to be taken back into the community of the Church. Sr. Thomas Morus

### **What important experiences did I have to courageously stay on the path?**

For me, this really means to bring the need of so many people before God in prayer and to ask for healing and salvation. Daily, intensely, hopefully bless everyone! Prayer as a help for all of us, but also the experience of limitations of our possibilities were important insights for me. Sr. M.

It is an unprecedented experience: suddenly people all over the world are at the mercy of this virus. This is also a spiritual challenge; on the one hand, to feel held in the security of God and to share responsibility in intercessory prayer for those with whom I live, whom I meet, whose suffering I hear about on television programs, and the possibility of being affected by it. Sr. Th. M.

### **What message do I want to share with everyone?**

Do not be afraid, face the reality! I found the instructions helpful and very important in this situation, although it was not easy to always keep the distance, to always sanitize the hands, to be disconnected from the church, not allowed to sing, not to receive visits or not to make visits to Maria Hilf. There was also no contact

with the convent. One almost became a stranger to others! These restrictions were the most noticeable. I could understand that the restrictions were the good way to protect each other, although it was painful. Now that there are relaxations, I feel a new sense of togetherness, which is good and makes one grateful. Sr. M.

The individual communities were

separated, but everyday life within our community was almost as usual, and I did not experience the loneliness that people often reported. Now that there are relaxations again, it is important for me to show and experience closeness anew, but also to continue to keep the distance that carefully offers protection in order to remain spared from the Corona pandemic. Sr. Th. M.

## You will be My Witnesses, Acts 1:8

### Witness of our time – Sr. M. Fabiola Jung, Ingenboh

At irregular intervals, we introduce fellow sisters with almost 100 years' experiences in mission, to share with us all the ups and downs of their lives. What do they think about that time? What do they have to tell us? Today Sr. M Fabiola answers questions from Sr. Christiane Jungo.



Sr. M. Fabiola Jung

Sr. Fabiola, you were born on March 28, 1922, 99 years ago. You are the senior member of our Province, having been professed for 73 years. By profession you were a nurse, and from 1952-1984 you were the director of the School of Health and Nursing at the Theodosianum in Zurich. Socially, and ecclesiastically,

almost everything changed during your lifetime.

*Sr. Fabiola: Yes, that is so. In the 1930s, there was a serious problem of unemployment. Many people did not have the possibility to earn a decent living. During the Second World War, all were challenged in a new way. I had to serve in the military medical service during the first and second mobilizations. (When the Red Cross granted the Ingenbohl convent the right to run its own nursing school in 1903, this came with two conditions: The Red Cross curriculum had to be adhered to, and in the event of war, at least two-thirds of its personnel had to be made available to the Army Medical Service Ed.). Those were very lively services, and years with many new guidelines and experiences.*

*Then came the post-war years. Along with the overall change in all areas, a shortage of trained*

nurses became noticeable, and at the same time the number of persons entering the convent had decreased. The school in Basel already existed for members of the order. In 1952, the convent in Ingenbohl opened the school for health and nursing care at the Theodosianum Hospital in Zurich. It was intended as a school for the so-called "free" nurses. We tried very hard to educate the students religiously, ecclesiastically, socially and professionally, i.e. holistically. We were well supported by the convent so that we could meet the new needs, because the demands increased from year to year.

What changes have been of special concern to you, have affected you?

Sr. F.: In 1972 our convent had to sell the Theodosianum Hospital in Zurich for financial and personnel reasons. The buyer was the city of Zurich, which planned a large retirement and nursing center. The sale triggered many discussions, especially in Catholic circles, and we as a nursing school also lost our "school hospital". Unexpectedly, we were able to move our school with 160 students to the newly built hospital in the Limmat Valley. The hospital was much larger, so that 20 Ingenbohl nurses were employed

at the same time. For us, it was a broadening of horizons, especially the ecumenical orientation, which was in demand here and came into effect. Retreat days in Taizé, and many religious-cultural offerings, shaped the young women at our nursing school. Competent teachers were a great support in achieving the goals, which had to be adapted to the new life situations. We were in harmony with the principle of Father Theodosius: "The need of the time is the will of God."

What has kept you going through all the changes?

Sr. F.: I am always amazed at how God has led me, and so many things have taken place all by themselves, by Divine Providence and guidance! In addition, I had the possibility of continuous good formation. God has also endowed me with faith, hope, trust and confidence. Besides, I was sustained by a sisterly, loving atmosphere in the community, daily moments of joy, prayer, meditation and silence. The unwavering trust of my Superiors did me good as well.

Which event has shaped you most?

Sr. F.: At the age of 80, I was given a new assignment, in

*keeping with my strength and experience as a nurse, namely, in the life and death care in the old age and nursing center Klus (formerly the Theodosianum). For 16 years I was able to do this task, which has given completion and fulfillment to my age above all else. This mission, too, was simply given to me by God. I was able to work in serenity, freedom and silence in a wonderful ecumenical environment.*

The name Franciscan means a lot to you. What is its special significance for you?

*Sr. F.: After my retirement, I was appointed as the house Superior in Antoniushaus Mattli in Morschach. As a Franciscan house, we hosted many people of all ages interested in Franciscan spirituality. The encounters and the collaboration with Br. Hilarin Felder OFM Cap., opened up the Franciscan world to me. Francis and Clare, and the Franciscan places in Assisi, led me deeper into the mystery of the Church, the mystery of Mary and the mystery of the soul. Inspired by Clare, I try to live the Franciscan consistency and spirituality, perseverance, simplicity and humility.*

Is there something like a "central

theme" that runs through your life?

*Sr. F.: I always adhered to the goals, principles and values that shaped our founders, lived by faith, strove for security in my professional life, and cultivated the cultural in various forms. I would like to call it the "Ingenbohl-Spirit". All this still accompanies me today. In the last phase of life, some things are no longer so easy, but belonging to the community takes care of many things.*

You trained many young women in health care and nursing. What was particularly important to you?

*Sr. F.: The holistic development into a personality, which is there with its abilities spiritually inspired for the healthy, sick and elderly people. Christian principles should shape them, professional competence and openness to the values of our culture should distinguish them.*

Dear Sr. Fabiola, conversations with you were always inspiring and rich, and so was our meeting today. I thank you so much for this, but also for your openness into advanced age. "May God be with you in the evening and in the morning, and always!"

## Information from the General Leadership

Recent months saw the appointments of new Leadership Teams to various Vicariates and Provinces. Most of these were done online.

### Appointments

**On May 4, 2021**, the General Leadership appointed as Vicariate Leadership for the Vicariate Taiwan for a term of three years.

Vicariate Superior:

Sr. Michelle Huang, 1<sup>st</sup> term

Assistant:

Sr. Magdalena Sue

Councilors:

Sr. Andy Gu

Sr. Petra-Maria Strobl

Sr. Immaculata Wang

Official start: 16.06.2021

We sincerely thank the newly appointed Vicariate Superior and the newly appointed and reappointed Sisters of the Vicariate Leadership for the Vicariate Taiwan, for their willingness to take on this challenging task. We wish them strength, courage and confidence for the assigned task and God's blessing to accompany them. We also express our heartfelt thanks to the outgoing Vicariate Superior and the outgoing Vicariate Councilors, and wish them all the

best, and God's abundant blessings for their future work.

**On June 7, 2021**, the General Leadership appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province Croatia for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior:

Sr. Valerija Široki, 2<sup>nd</sup> term

Assistant: to be appointed after three months of working together

Councilors:

Sr. M. Lucija Kopic,

Sr. M. Emanuela Kvesic

Sr. Ivanka Marija Vrgoc

Sr. Nikolina Nikolic

Official start: 08.09.2021

**On June 10, 2021**, the General Leadership appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province Baden-Württemberg for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior:

Sr. Maria Paola Zinniel, 2<sup>nd</sup> term

Assistant:

Sr. Susanne Bader

Councilors:

Sr. Birgit-Maria Krietemeyer

Sr. Regina Maria Uhl

Official start: 31.10.2021

**On June 18, 2021**, the General Leadership appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Mid India Province for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior:  
Sr. Georgina Nadukudyil, 3<sup>rd</sup> term  
Assistant:

Sr. Arpana Barwa

Councilors:

Sr. Suchita Bara  
Sr. Clerita D'Mello  
Sr. Diana Chettoor  
Sr. Veronica Choranth

Official start: 15.10. 2021

**On July 2, 2021**, the General Leadership appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province of India North East for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior:  
Sr. Pushpita Chathamalil, 2<sup>nd</sup> term  
Assistant:

Sr. Tresa Paul

Councilors:

Sr. Annie Jose Vezhaparambil  
Sr. Helen Lopes  
Sr. Philo Moras  
Sr. Mukta Besra

Official start: 15.02. 2022

**On July 10, 2021**, the General Leadership appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province India East for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior:  
Sr. Celine Chemmamadiyil, 2<sup>nd</sup> term  
Assistant:

Sr. Benny D'Cunha

Councilors:

Sr. Sherin Jose Kalathiparambil  
Sr. Kishori Ekka  
Sr. Irene Tiru

Official start: 02.02. 2022

We sincerely thank the newly appointed and reappointed Sisters of the Provincial Leadership for the Provinces Croatia, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Mid India, India North East and India East for their willingness for this demanding service. We wish them strength, courage and confidence for the entrusted responsibility and God's blessing to accompany them. We are very grateful to the outgoing Provincial Councilors and wish them all the best, and God's abundant blessing for their future task.

**On June 11, 2021**, the General Leadership appointed the Leadership Team for the USA in the new "House" structure for a first term of three years:

Superior:  
Sr. Linda Songy, 1<sup>st</sup> term

First Councilor:

Sr. Pat Cormack

Second councilor:

Sr. Kathy Lange

Official start: 24.10. 2021

On October 24, 2021, the USA Province will make a decisive structural change from a Province to the new "House" structure. The Province will be dissolved and will be under the new "House " structure of the General Leadership. Sr. Marija Brizar, Superior General, and Sr. Dorothee Halbach will go to the USA on October 20 to participate in this historic change with the sisters. In the first issue of Theodosia in 2022 we will report in more detail on the entire intensive process that the sisters in the Province have gone through. We especially wish strength, courage and confidence to the new Leadership Team for the assigned task in the new structure, and God's blessing to accompany them. We also express our deep gratitude to the former Provincial Leadership of the USA Province. Sr. Pat Cormack, Sr. Carol

Crosby, Sr. Kathy Wiesneski and Sr. Linda Songy, together with all the sisters, and under professional guidance, have prepared step by step over the past years for the upcoming change. We wish them all the best and God's abundant blessings.

### **The first online conference for the treasurers**

Under the direction of Dr. Peter Krause, the first conference for the treasurers of the Congregation took place from May 25-29, 2021, hosted by Sr. Marija Brizar, Superior General, and the entire General Leadership. The conference was organized by Sr. Jaroslava Kotuřáková, our General Treasurer. Under the expert guidance of Dr. Peter Krause, attorney-at-law from the Völker Group in Reutlingen Germany, all participants were introduced to the topic "core assets" and dealt with it intensively. Dr. Krause was assisted by his colleague, Mr. Volker Rieger, during the conference.

The professional interpreters and other translators, who simultaneously translated into the respective languages, also contributed to the success of the conference.



Online conference for treasurers

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