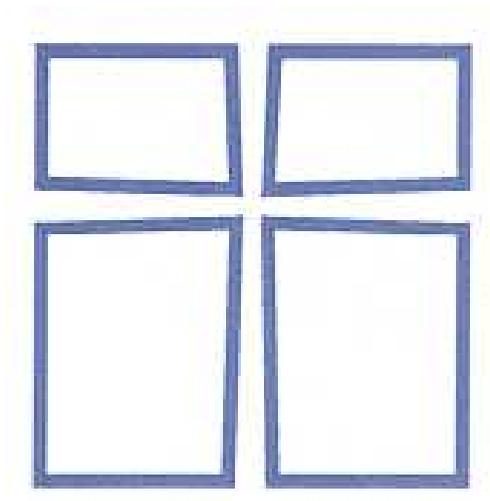

Theodosia



Quarterly
of the Sisters of Mercy
of the Holy Cross
Institute Ingenbohl
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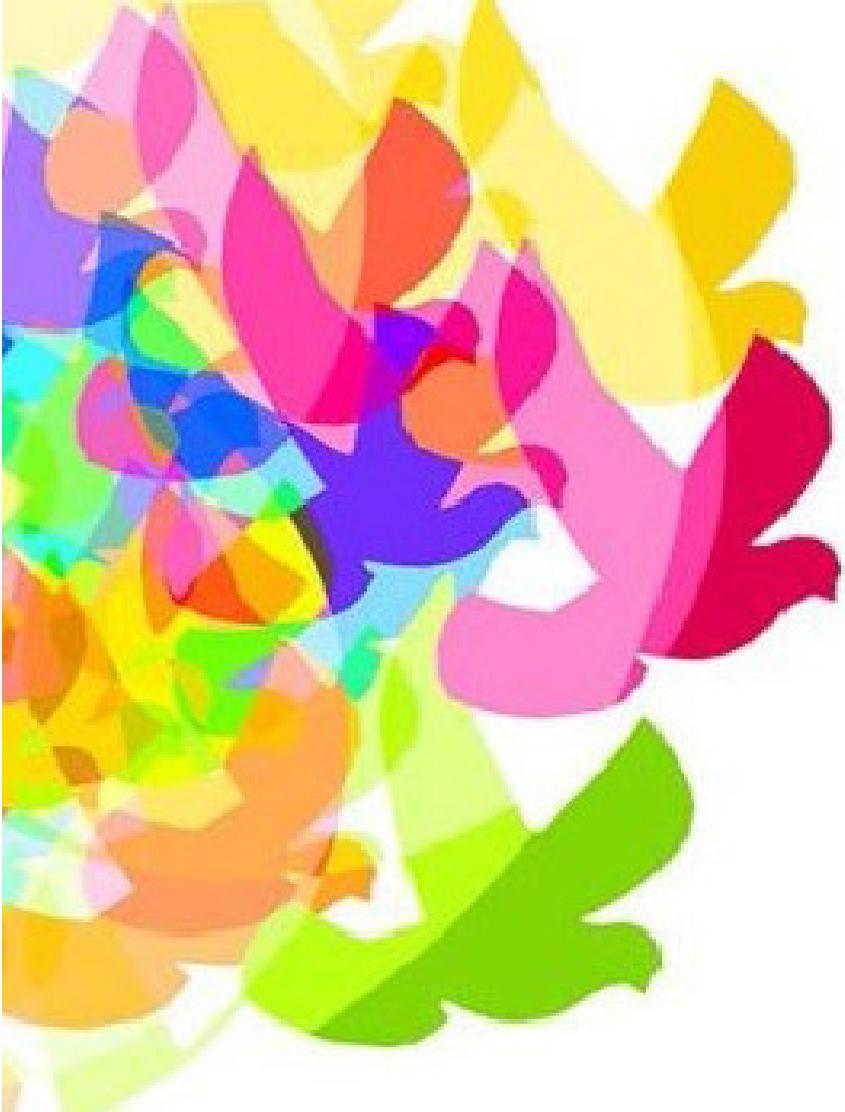
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Moved by God's Spirit! Picture: Pfeffergrafik

Editorial

What had to be postponed twice for reasons of the corona pandemic, became a reality in 2022: The 23rd General Chapter of our Congregation. It is planned as a substantive and an electoral chapter for the period, August 2 to 24, in Altötting Germany. Election day is August 18th. The motto is relevant and contemporary: "Moved by God's Spirit, going forward with courage". We trust and rely on the Holy Spirit to show us ways, to make us courageous to believe in a future, and to stay on the path. Above all, according to a well-known prayer, may he give us the serenity to accept things we cannot change, the courage to change things we can, and the wisdom to differentiate one from the other.

Due to the situation, the Theodosia is rather modest in terms of content. It is not that nothing has happened, but at the moment circumstances set other priorities and the planned contributions will appear only after the General Chapter.

The sermon of Fr. Emmeram Stacheder OFM at the Jubilee celebration in Ingenbohl gave all those present valuable thoughts for their everyday lives: *"The Creating, Loving and Suffering humans"*.

Since the General Chapter is also an elective chapter, our previous Superiors General are briefly introduced in turn. The information is taken from the reference work "Helvetia Sacra", which describes Catholic and ecclesiastical institutions in Switzerland and supplements them with short biographies of the Superiors. The articles for *"Our Superiors General"* were written until 1998 by Sr. Renata Pia Venzin +. The acting Superior General, Sr. Marija Brizar, will share her experiences in the next Theodosia.

"Give Me Wings", a prayer by Theresia Hauser, is a fitting motto for the General Chapter.

The free-flowing series *"You will be My Witnesses,"* Acts 1:8, continues with a variety of testimonies about *the "Witness of Our Time - Sister Johanna Brandstätter"*, who celebrated her 100th birthday in India, and has been sharing her life with the poor since 1955.

Sister Zoe Maria was known far beyond our community as a theologian and historian. After she died of a serious illness in April 2022, the Theodosia remembers her with *"In Memoriam of Sister Zoe Maria Isenring +"*.

As a summary, as it were, a poem by Rose Ausländer *"Pledge"* appears as the last contribution, combined with a few reflections for our life in the community.

Sr. Christiane Jungo

The Creating, Loving, and Suffering Humans

Homily by Fr. Emmeram Stacheder OFM, Rector Ecclesiae

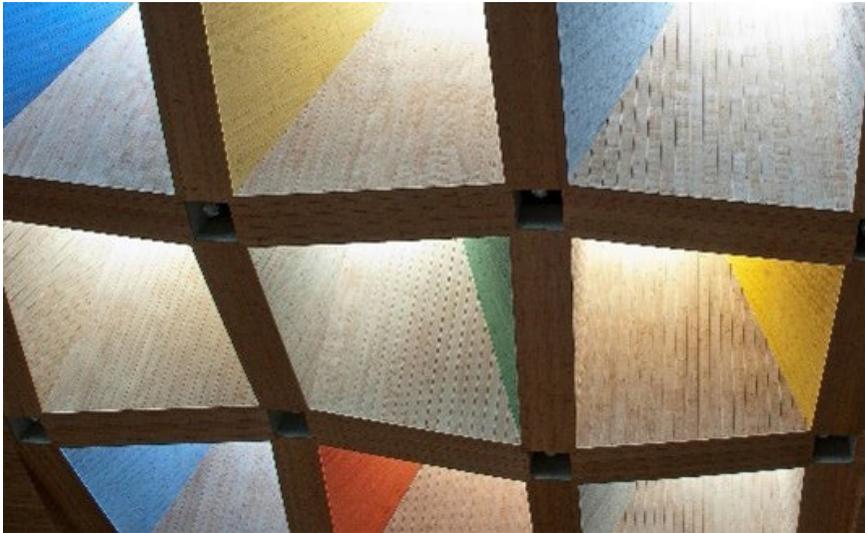
Jubilee celebration, May 14, 2022 in the Convent Church, Ingenbohl

Dear jubilarians, relatives, acquaintances and friends of the jubilarians, and dear sisters!

According to Viktor Frankl, there are three basic human traits in us: the "homo faber," the "homo amans," and the "homo patens". This is the creating, the loving and the suffering human being. All three originate from the spiritual power that is unique to man.

Creating means more than just producing, even animals do that when they build caves or nests. Creating in the sense of "homo faber" means the ability to create what was not there before. A house, a picture, music, a festival, all these are first created in the head, in the mind, in the heart, before they become actualized. This may be compared to breaking through a wall, which opens up new spaces, a future. Ultimately, it is a creative achievement. Mozart was a child prodigy, but had not his extraordinary talent been nurtured from childhood, and had he not believed in himself, he might have become an average court musician, but not the genius the whole world celebrates.

The "homo amans" or the art of loving. The ability to love is not only directed to the fellow human being. We are also capable of loving art, music, literature, nature, and even our work, from which many seek their identity. Love in this sense is the art of giving and receiving, of giving and receiving gifts, of experiencing and suffering. Love is divine and at the same time, a human trait. In faith we experience that love is the grace of God, who lets us participate in his all-surpassing love, which is revealed in Jesus. But what has the art of love to do with the unemotional work environment? In professional life, it is not necessarily about personal relationships, but about a clearly graded service relationship. It's not about experiential values, but about performance. And yet: Managers confirm time and again that a large part of their tasks is "relationship work". Certainly, it is about organization, about corporate goals. But how could these goals be achieved if we are not open to the deeper values, to



Decke Klosterkirche Ingenboh

fellow humanity, respect, solidarity, and understanding? It's actually simple: people sense whether you like them or not. They sense whether you trust them, whether you have confidence in them. They sense whether it is goodwill that they encounter, or whether it is just a strategic game.

The "homo patens". This does not simply mean someone who tolerates everything, or lets things pass, someone who does not assert himself. The Latin word 'patere' means to be open. It means people who do not close themselves off in the face of the many questions of the people and

their needs. It means to people who do not avoid the confrontation with the harsh reality of everyday life, who face it. Such people live dangerously in a certain way and, in fact, are often hurt because of their approach and attitude. The "homo patens" has the courage and patience to face all these, to expose himself. It is not for the sake of suffering, but for the sake of life. It is for the sake of others' life. When man faces it, he is quite capable of having new meaningful experiences. Thus he is able to learn to change attitudes, views and opinions.

Now you may ask, what does all this have to do with today's festive

occasion? Obviously, it is about the activity and life of sisters who have lived and worked in a religious community for 50 years. But it is precisely in their areas of activity and in their communities as well, that there were points of reference for this. Unfortunately, I cannot list them individually for each of you. This is your own follow-up work and perhaps that of all those who have walked with you up to now. Perhaps also with you, who are celebrating with the jubilarians.

We can only create a new world, be "homo faber" and to renew the face of the earth, as we formulate it in a prayer to the Holy Spirit, if we listen to God's word and enter into the lives of the people, are open to their lives. We can only bring about transformation in people if we accept them as they are and love them in the spirit of "homo amans". If we show them and let them experience that we trust them, that we have confidence in them. If we become involved in their lives, go along with them, and sympathize with

them. Fr. Theodosius put it this way: "Understand the signs of the time as God's call, and act."

We can become and be "homo patens" only if we go along as Jesus did with the Emmaus disciples. If we first listen and do not immediately give advice, which sometimes imposes more than advises. If we prove that life and faith belong together and are mutually dependent.

All these are not only attitudes of sisters and/or of us priests, but actually basic attitudes of all Christians. As we look back today with you, dear jubilarians, at 50 years, we do so in gratitude to the Lord, who has called you and led you. He has given you many and different people along the way, and he has brought you into his boat, into the boat of the church, which can always get into trouble. And we ask the Lord to continue to give you strength, perseverance and health to help build a humane world and church in thoughts, words, works, and encounters. Amen.

Our Superiors General

The multi-volume handbook "Helvetia Sacra" also lists the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross of Ingenbohl with their General Superiors in Section VIII, Volume 2 "The Congregations in Switzerland, 19th and 20th century". This volume was published in 1998. The facts were compiled by Sr. Renata Pia Venzin (1921-2013), former history and German teacher at Theresianum. The numerous footnotes have been omitted because they would have been a hindrance to the translations of the Theodosia. Additions in *italics* are made by Sr. Christiane Jungo. A full text with all sources can be obtained from the editors.

Maria Theresa Scherer, 1857-1888 (relates to years in office)



Born on October 31, 1825 in Meggen LU, baptized Anna Maria Katharina, daughter of Karl Josef Scherer and Anna Maria née Sigrüst. At the age of seven she loses her father, grows up with relatives and attends elementary

school in Meggen. She then undergoes practical training in housekeeping and nursing at the public hospital (Bürgerspital) Luzern.

On October 5, 1844, she meets Fr. Theodosius Florentini in Altdorf, who promises her admission to the institute of teaching sisters that was being founded. Katharina enters the congregation of the teaching sisters in Altdorf on March 1, 1845, is introduced to religious and professional life here and for a short time in Menzingen, and makes her profession as Sr. Maria Theresa in the church of the Cistercian nuns of Wurmsbach on October 27, 1845, together with the first three teaching sisters and her co-novice Aloisia Winiger.

She works as a practical assistant for one year at the school in Galgenen and as Superior and teacher in Baar, and in the same capacity for three years in Oberägeri.

As a self-taught student, she passes the teacher's examination before the education council in Zug on November 3, 1849. From autumn 1850 onward, she looks after the poor in Näfels and the girls of the local "industrial school". After a few months as a teacher at the village school in Menzingen, she is appointed as Principal in Chur on March 1, 1852, and moves in 1853 to the Auxiliary Hospital Planaterra, the first Holy Cross Hospital established in 1850.

When the two branches of activity, school and works of mercy, were separated in 1856, she decides in favor of works of mercy and while still in Chur, is elected the first Superior General by the community of sisters in Ingenbohl on October 13, 1857. In agreement with the pioneering ideas and deeds of the founder - except for his factory ventures, against which she often warns him - a multifaceted work of nursing care and girls' education develops under her leadership, both in the four linguistic regions of Switzerland and in southern Germany, Bohemia, Upper and Lower Austria, Tyrol, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Styria, Moravia and Hungary.

The sudden death of the founder in Heiden on February 15, 1865, deeply affects the young institute. Voluntarily and in spite of advice from various responsible persons, the Superior General takes over the extremely high debt burden resulting from the Theodosian undertakings. Credit goes to her, "the Institute did not suffocate in material worries during the difficult time of debt repayment. Her offer of

resignation on February 14, 1873, overcame the resistance from the sisters at the Motherhouse to the revised Constitutions, formulated to maintain and consolidate the founding spirit. In 1878, Leo XIII approves the revised Constitutions.

The conflicts with canonical and practical questions of professional work and convent life do not prevent Maria Theresa Scherer from providing nurses for the hospital service of the wars in Europe: in 1856 in the Neuenburg trade, in 1866 in the German War, in 1870 at the defection of the Bourbaki army, as well as for the smallpox and typhus patients in many cantons of Switzerland. Supported by bishops and local chaplains, statesmen and princes, Catholic and Protestant laymen, she establishes and organizes hospitals, outpatient clinics, houses for the poor and orphanages, children's and old people's homes, elementary schools, schools for the deaf and dumb, secondary schools and boarding schools for girls. In the years of the cultural struggle, and especially in connection with the referendum against the appointment of a federal school secretary (1882), she resolutely supports the teaching of the sisters in public schools.

Continuous physical ailments do not prevent Maria Theresa Scherer from visiting all the sisters in the widely scattered establishments. Five months before her death, she visits the Joseph Hostel in Rome, where her illness takes on an acute form; on her return to Switzerland, she takes care

of the establishment of the hospital in Zurich (Theodosianum) and lays the foundation stone for the boarding house near the Motherhouse (Theresianum).

She passed away on June 16, 1888, in Ingenbohl. Her work and her death receive broad coverage in the press. In the "Swiss Portrait Gallery" of 1888, Maria Theresa Scherer is portrayed as the only woman among 48 personalities from politics and culture. The bishop's information process is opened in Ingenbohl on July 12, 1931. The heroic nature of her life of virtue is confirmed on April 2, 1993, and she is beatified on October 29, 1995 in Rome.

Maria Pankratia Widmer, 1888-1906

Born on June 29, 1843 in Neuenkirch LU, baptismal name Elisabeth, daughter of Alois and Elisabeth Amrein, grows up in Neuenkirch LU. At the age of eleven she loses her father. After elementary school she attends the nursery school in the orphanage in Lucerne, which is run by the sisters of Ingenbohl. Here she meets Theodosius Florentini and requests him for admission. She arrives in Ingenbohl on April 11, 1861, is trained as a teacher, works as a novice in Domat/Ems for a short time, and after her



profession (September 12, 1864) in Schwyz, until Maria Theresa Scherer appoints her Directress of the novitiate in 1874, and her assistant in 1875. Maria Pankratia is elected as Superior General by the General Chapter on September 20, 1888; she is re-elected in 1894 and 1900.

She continues with wisdom and kindness what her predecessor had not been able to accomplish: the new buildings in 1888 for the boarding and school, postulancy and novitiate (from 1890 called Theresianum), in 1899 the hospital Theodosianum on Asylstrasse Zurich, and in 1900 the San Pancrazio Sanatorium in Arco. Thanks to the large number of new members, the

establishments in southern Germany are united to form the Baden-Hohenzollern Province (1892-1894), and in 1904 the establishments in Tyrol-Vorarlberg are granted provincial status.

In 1894, the Ingenbohl Sisters take over their first mission station in India (Bettiah). Not as resilient as her predecessor, Maria Pankratia falls ill half a year after her third re-election. From 1902 she is replaced by Maria Aniceta Regli as Vicar General, resigns officially in 1906 and passed away on April 29, 1909 in Ingenbohl.

Maria Aniceta Regli, 1906-1921

Josefa Rosa Regli, born on July 24, 1856 in Andermatt UR, daughter of Paul and Clara née Regli, comes from a family of the Urseren Valley, which was already known at the time of the Milan processions and has famous representatives of secular and clerical status. At the boarding school in Ingenbohl, the twelve-year-old began her training as a teacher, and four years later, the candidacy on October 15, 1872. On April 24, 1873, she receives the religious name Maria Aniceta. In the fall of the same year, she passes the teacher's examination in Schwyz, as a novice teaches at the village school in Ingenbohl, and in the second year of her

novitiate at the St. Josef Institute in Guglera, where she demonstrates great teaching talent and pedagogical skill. After her profession in April 1875, she returns to the Guglera, first as teacher, then as prefect and directress for 19 years. In 1894 she becomes the assistant of Mother Maria Pankratia Widmer and, after her illness, Vicar General.

On September 17, 1906, the General Chapter elects Maria Aniceta Regli as Superior General. Re-election in 1912; the second term of office is extended for three more years in 1918, since no General Chapter can take place due to the turmoil of



the war. Her outstanding leadership and energy extend to all the professions of the Institute. She promotes the teacher training colleges in Ingenbohl and Estavayer-le-Lac, founds a commercial school in Feldkirch (Vorarlberg), a school for service workers in Bremgarten and intensifies the modern training and further education of teachers at all levels. Since 1908, sisters study at the University of Freiburg i.Ü., in Oxford, at the Art Academy in Munich, and at the Church Music School in Beuron. In Steyl, sisters are trained for the institute's own printing shop. Vacation courses, training and refresher courses, and leadership courses for superiors are organized from the Motherhouse. The Association of Catholic Women Teachers in Switzerland appoints Maria Aniceta as an honorary member in 1909.

The nursing school of the Motherhouse is affiliated to the Swiss Red Cross in 1904. Subsequently, the nurses perform significant missions in the war zones of Eastern and Central Europe, as well as in the military hospitals and epidemic hospitals of Switzerland. With the help of the Swiss Federal Council and high officials of the countries concerned, Maria Aniceta succeeds in visiting all the

provincial homes (except in Slavonia) in 1917 and 1920. She visits the provinces of Tyrol-Vorarlberg, Upper and Lower Austria, Styria, Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary and Baden-Hohenzollern, whose legal and organizational structures have to be reorganized after the Treaty of Versailles (after World War I).

Despite resistance from the capitulars, she resigns from the office of Superior General in 1921, but accepts the appointment as General Visitor and Vicar of the establishments in the USA, with the mission to examine the state of the works there, to provide for the foundation of a novitiate, and thus to lay the foundations for a future province. The spontaneity of her character and her unassuming motherliness, combined with a prudent adaptation of the statutes of the congregation to the American mentality, characterize this undertaking. She serves as Superior of the new Quisisana Clinic in Rome from 1927 to 1936. She passed away on June 24, 1939 in Ingenbohl.

Theresia Beck, 1921-1933

Mathilde Beck, born on April 6, 1868 in Sursee LU, daughter of Franz Xaver Beck and Maria née Leu, comes from a respected

peasant family. As the youngest of nine children, she experiences a sunny youth on the family estate. After her time at the institute, during which she devotes herself to the study of languages and music, she receives training in housekeeping on the Beck farm. In the meantime, her eldest sister Mariain joins the teaching sisters in Menzingen. Initially, Mathilde does not want to become a teacher, but a sister for the poor, and therefore arrives in Ingenbohl on May 9, 1891, where she begins her novitiate as Sister Theresa. At the same time she teaches French at the Theresianum and attends the second French seminar course. She is professed on August 31, 1893. From 1894 she works for 18 years as a teacher in the Institute of St. Joseph, Guglera, as prefect and as superior. In 1912 she is elected as General Councillor and on June 18, 1921 as Superior General.

She sees her main task in preserving and extending what Mother Aniceta had built up. This applies especially to the provinces in Eastern Europe, where the consequences of the First World War make intensive assistance necessary. Despite the political and economic difficulties of the post-war period, the Province of Slovakia is founded in 1927, and



in 1930 the Italian Province, with its headquarters in Besozzo (Varese). The Mother Province thanks the initiative of Theresia Beck for the Sisters' Hospital St. Josef in Ingenbohl (1930), today a Sisters' Home; the High Altitude Clinic Florentinum in Arosa (1929); the Girls' Boarding School Theodosia in Champfer (1929), in St. Moritz (1943-1986) respectively and the Theodosia Study Home in Freiburg i.Ü. (1924-1983).

At the end of the second term of office, Theresia Beck returns to the Guglera as Superior. From 1943 onwards she is in charge of the secretariat of Mother Maria Theresa Scherer in the motherhouse. She died on July 20, 1946 in Ingenbohl.

Maria Agnes Schenk, 1933-1941



Born on May 12, 1878, baptized Hulda, daughter of Paul and Nanette, née Strobel, of Sigmaringen, Germany. At the age of 16 she becomes an orphan, she begins her teacher training at the Theresianum, passes the teacher's examination in Schwyz in 1898, and then teaches for a year at the farm school in Chur. She arrives in Ingenbohl on July 11, 1899. After her profession on September 10, 1901, she teaches the second and third classes at the Theresianum, and in 1906 takes over as the prefect of the boarding school and at the same time the management of the school.

She is Vicar General from 1912 to 1933, and on 6 June 1933 she is elected Superior General. In the difficult political times, she does not see her task in the further expansion of the provinces; she wants above all to maintain and deepen the spiritual bond with the Motherhouse. In Switzerland, she promotes the Theresianum secondary school, with generous extensions of the 1914-1916 institution, and the introduction of Type B Grammar school in 1925 are her work. As a German citizen, the office of Superior General is often burdensome for her. Threatening political entanglements and hostilities put a strain on her rather delicate constitution. In the eighth year of her term of office, she falls seriously ill and dies unexpectedly in the St. Clara Hospital in Basel on June 12, 1941, despite weeks of intensive medical care. She is buried in Ingenbohl.

Maria Diomira Brandenburg, 1942-1954

Born on November 3, 1880 in Zug, baptismal name Marie, daughter of Georg and Maria née Strübi. She becomes orphan at an early age, she arrives in Ingenbohl on September 16, 1898, and is trained as a teacher at the Theresianum. After her profession on September 8, 1903, she



teaches for 20 years in the primary and secondary classes of the farm school in Chur. Directress of the Postulancy in Ingenbohl in 1923, Novice Mistress in 1929, Superior of the Quisisana Clinic in Rome in 1939 and at the same time is entrusted with the work as General procurator here.

On June 16, 1942, she is elected Superior General in Ingenbohl. Her term of office is marked by the struggle for the existence of the provinces in the states initially dependent on National Socialist Germany and since 1945 governed by the Communists. In October 1945 she visits the most endangered province of Bohemia. Thanks to the mediation of the

Swiss Federal Council and with the help of the Swiss Red Cross, several hundred sisters of German origin are able to resettle in Switzerland by air, starting in 1954. About a third of them receive permanent residence permits, while the majority joins the Bavarian province in the 1960s.

After the end of the Second World War, the provincial houses and establishments in Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Hungary are nationalized, as were the proprietary houses in Yugoslavia. On February 25, 1948, the Iron Curtain falls on the provinces and establishments in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Czechoslovakia. The religious orders in Hungary are dissolved in 1950. In China, too, the works of the Congregation are hit hard by the political changes.

The Superior General is not discouraged and takes up new tasks in India, the USA and Taiwan. Despite staff shortages, it supports schools and hospitals in Switzerland, such as the Theodosia girls' boarding school in St. Moritz, and the farm and Florentine schools in Chur. For the planned catholic secondary school in Zurich-Wiedikon, she holds out the prospect of teaching sisters. Various hospitals in Ticino

and western Switzerland, the Theodosianum in Zurich and its new nursing school, the Holy Cross Hospital in Chur, the Florentinum Hospital in Arosa, the Victoria Hospital in Berne and the St. Clara Hospital in Basel receive extensions and new buildings. At the same time, it is concerned with the continuous professional development of the members of the Congregation.

In the spirit of the founder Theodosius Florentini, she participates in the establishment of a workers' pastoral care unit of the priestly chapter of Innerschwyz and provides it with the necessary rooms in the house of the priests of the Ingenbohl convent.

Open to the new circumstances of the post-war years, she asks permission from Rome for the whole Congregation to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in the local language.

Maria Diomira Brandenburg convenes a General Chapter in 1954 - for the first time since 1933 - and makes preparations for a revision of the Constitutions.

She resigns as Superior General on August 4, 1954, becomes again the Superior of the Quisisana Clinic and the Procurator General in Rome from 1954-1959, died on September 18, 1959 in Ingenbohl.

Elena Giorgetti, 1954-1966



Born on November 20, 1906 in San Nazzaro TI, from Stabio TI, baptismal name Elisa Claudina, daughter of Giuseppe and Clemencia née Fentana. As a graduate of the Theresianum commercial school, she arrives in Ingenbohl on June 30, 1925 and graduates from the teachers' training college in Treviglio (Bergamo). After her profession in Ingenbohl on March 24, 1930, she completes her training as a secondary school teacher in Castelnuovo Fogliani. She graduates from the Sacred Heart University in Milan (laurea in lettere 9.11.1934), passes the state examination in Rome in May 1935 and obtains Italian

citizenship in 1936. She teaches at the Rosetum Institute in Besozzo (Varese) and becomes its Director from 1943 to 1950. Thanks to her courage and skill, many Jewish children and refugees find shelter in this establishment and the boarding school survives the war years.

Elena Giorgetti is called to Ingenbohl as General Councilor in the spring of 1950 and is elected as Superior General on August 4, 1954. Her term of office is marked by great vitality, courage and determination. Decisions of far-reaching importance have to be taken: the realization of the restoration of the entire convent site on the Ingenbohl hill, which has been planned and prepared for decades and which begins in 1964 and has to make way for a modern new building; In 1954, the United States and the West Switzerland Commissionship are made provinces; in 1964, the takeover of the new girls' secondary school in the Sacred Heart Parish of Zurich-Wiedikon; in 1966, the establishment of the Swiss Mother Province; furthermore, the assumption of new tasks in Brazil, while the provinces and establishments in the countries of Eastern Europe suffer heavy losses or are condemned to extinction by the annexation of houses and the

prohibition of the admission of new members.

Elena Giorgetti visits all the provinces twice except Hungary, which she visits once. Already in 1960, she considers the preparations for the revision of the Constitutions as the main theme of the General Chapter and urges the commissions appointed for this purpose to be "more elastic, more precise and more positive". She pays great attention to the formation and ongoing formation of the sisters and, in view of the changing needs of the times, emphasizes the openness to new apostolates.

At the end of her second term, she becomes Provincial Superior in Italy, with office in Besozzo (1966-1975), and Superior of the Rosetum Institute (1975-1984), where she opens the Linguistic Lyceum; she passed away in Besozzo on October 3, 1993, and is buried in the cemetery there in the crypt of the Holy Cross Sisters.

Maria Edelfrieda Haag, 1966-1978

Born on May 22, 1914 in Basel, baptismal name Martha, daughter of Paul and Karoline, née Nünlist. After the compulsory school years in Basel, she arrives in Ingenbohl



on September 7, 1932 and is admitted to the grammar school in Theresianum. She takes her vows on August 29, 1938. She finishes her university studies in Freiburg i.Ü. In 1942, she completes her studies at the St. Gallen Teacher Training College with a secondary teaching certificate in mathematics and the natural sciences. Her first teaching experience was at the Secondary School Theresianum, then at the Girls' Secondary Schools in Bütschwil and Gossau.

In 1960 she is elected as the General Councilor, then the Superior General on May 26, 1966. During her term of office she opens new mission territories: In 1966 in Brazil and in 1972 in

Burundi; in 1970 she establishes the Province India and the Vicariate Slovenia. Her term of office on the one hand is characterized by openness and concilience with regard to the new Constitutions demanded by Vatican Council II (*Special Chapter 1970, Constitutions ad experimentum from 1972*), and on the other hand by vigilance against extreme attitudes. During her term of office, the construction and consecration of the new convent facilities with a chapel is done in 1975.

After her resignation in 1978, she takes over the leadership of the Sisters' community of the retirement home of St. Joseph, Guglera. After 6 years in 1984 she returns to the Motherhouse, where she assists in the secretariat of Mother Maria Theresa Scherer. *She passed away on April 17, 2004 in Ingenbohl.*

Gertrud Furger, 1978-1996

From Vals GR, born on November 30, 1936 in Bern, baptismal name Ines, daughter of Fridolin and Gertrud Alice née Reck. She goes to schools in Bern, completes the Swiss High School Certificate in 1955 and arrives in Ingenbohl on October 18, 1955. She completes her Language course in London with



diploma in 1958 (Diploma of English Studies). After her profession on August 25, 1960, she studies pedagogy at the University of Freiburg i.Ü. She teaches English and French at the Theresianum from 1958 to 1959, and does short internships in social work from 1962 to 1963. In May 1963 she leaves for Taiwan, where she is active in the formation of religious candidates, and is Mission Superior from 1972 to 1975.

Since 1974 she is a General Councilor and is elected Superior General on May 15, 1978. The framework of the 1972 Constitutions is implemented by Gertrud Furger in the final form. She considers it an important

concern of her office to promote and maintain unity in the diversity of the multicultural provinces of the Institute in fidelity to the charism of the founders. *She supports the specificity of each province and emphasizes the cultural richness of an international community.*

With the crumbling of communism, Czechoslovakia and Hungary gain independence. New opportunities open up for the provinces of Slovakia, Moravia (now the Czech Republic) and Hungary. In order to accompany these processes well, the General Chapter elects Gertrud Furger for the 3rd term in 1990.

Under her leadership, in 1991, the Province of India is restructured into the Central, North East and South Provinces.

After her terms of office, she carries out various tasks on behalf of the General Administration: contacts with the Vatican, translation work, and contacts with sisters. At present she lives in the St. Joseph Sisters' Home in Ingenbohl.

Louise-Henri Kolly, 1996-2008

From Essert FR, born on December 28, 1940 in Billens FR, baptismal name H el ene, daughter of Henri and Louisa n ee Ducrest. After primary and secondary school she arrives in Fribourg, where she makes her profession on April 27, 1965. She is trained



as a nurse in Fribourg, and from 1969 to 1971 works as a nurse in the hospital of Sierre VS. She joins the College of Nursing in Lausanne and graduates in 1973 with the Certificate of Nursing and the Certificate of Administration. From 1973 to 1979, starts working in Siders and Sitten as a health care professional, as an expert for the Swiss Red Cross diploma in nursing and as a Supervisor of the School of Nursing. From 1979 to 1988, she was the Administrator of the St. Joseph Nursing Home in Sierre, at the same time completing her training in geriatrics in Geneva.

In 1973, she becomes a member of the Provincial Council of the Province of Western Switzerland, Assistant to the Provincial

Superior, then Provincial Superior; she is elected the Superior General on July 22, 1996, in Ingenbohl; she assumes office on January 12, 1997. She understands her ministry as a service to the sisters, as a mediation of spiritual orientation and practical help to update the works of Mercy in the 17 Provinces and 3 Vicariates.

During her second term in office, with her strong support, the two pamphlets, "Drawing from the Source", a detailed formulation of our charism for today, and "Living from the Source - "Ratio formationis", a binding basis for the initial and ongoing formation for all sisters, are published.

The 150th anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross Ingenbohl in 2006, with the mystery play by Silja Walter "House of New Creation", also takes place in her time.

In 2002, the first sisters begin pastoral and social work in the parish of Perm, Russia.

According to the mission of the General Chapter, they promote the "reorganization of provinces and vicariates". The first example is the establishment of the Province "Europa Mitte".

After her resignation she lives in Fribourg.

Give Me Wings

A prayer for the theme of the General Chapter 2022

Holy Spirit,
make me aware of
what is good for me,
according to the other,
helpful to all of us.

Give me wings
so that I may rise
from the fatigue of the heart.
Break through the fogs
of my sadness,
so that I may participate
in being together.

Touch my spirit,
so that I may set out into life.
Awaken my weary soul.
Refresh me with the dew
of your presence.

My dried up feelings
Make them flow,
my paralyzed mind
straighten up
Help me to stand up myself.
I will go
where you lead me.

Theresia Hauser 1921-2016, longtime
women's chaplain D

Thoughts on prayer by Theresia Hauser

Daily routine, stress, fatigue, mental burdens, inner listlessness up to resignation and sadness: situations and feelings that probably everyone knows. - These are precisely the moments in life when we often do not want to pray and are not able to pray.

Theresia Hauser takes it as the starting point of her prayer of petition to the Holy Spirit. - He is the dimension of God who can revive us, who gives us new energy, gives us wings, breaks open our paralyses, rigidities and dryness.

The prayerful person starts with herself: *make me aware of what is good for me*. If I myself am not well, if I am burnt out, I cannot look beyond my own fence. So the basis for setting out again into life, that is, into my everyday life, is the intense request that it may go well with me again. Here, any modesty would be out of place.

Break through the fogs, refresh me with the dew of your presence, make it flow it is prayed here with the last remaining strength and imagination. *Give me wings*: It is not a humble plea please help! Here a person wants to feel again something of the fullness of life, wants to experience again something of that God who is like rain on dry land, who refreshes the weary and heals the paralyzed. He wants to participate in the abundance of life that is

promised to us!

The prayerful person wants to let the living spirit work on her own body and soul. Only then is she able to say "I" again with self-confidence, to look up to herself. And then she will have the energy again to attentively feel what is helpful for the other person and for all of us. For then she is able to walk confidently and without fear, where you lead me.

Susanne Skowronek

You will be My Witnesses, Acts 1:8

Witness of our time – Sr. Johanna Brandstätter

Various writers

In the following we will present sisters who in their long religious life have walked in the footsteps of Jesus and who have carried our charism into the present time. The contributions of various people become a tribute to Sr. Johanna, who celebrated her profession in 1951 and has lived and worked in India since 1955.

Who is Sr. Johanna Brandstätter?

Sr. Johanna developed a fascination for India after she had read 'Discovery of India' by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. She left her beloved country Austria in 1955 to embrace unknown people, unfamiliar culture, and languages. It was like God telling Abraham to go from his country, his kindred, and his father's house to the land that He will show him (Gen 12:1). She was guided by the motto, "The need of the time is the will of God." On February 21, 2022, she



Sr. Johanna

was able to celebrate her 100th birthday. To mark the occasion, we asked people who lived with her to share brief memories, which have been put together to form a large, colorful bouquet of gratitude.

Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril, General Councillor, Ingenbohl

Personal testimonials

We are indeed blessed to have with us Sr. M. Johanna Brandstätter, a great Indian missionary. The mystical element that she always lived manifested in the love of her needy brothers and sisters. We, her sisters, and all who have met her in our life's journey certainly feel that hers is a life well lived. In the words of St. Paul hers is "a life poured out like libation" in loving response to meeting the needs of the time. At present, she spends her time praying and resting in Kothanur community, Bangalore, India South Province.

Sr. Flory D'Souza, Provincial Superior, India South Province

I am of the knowledge that Sr. Johanna Brandstätter, the outstanding Woman of God who has completed her hundred years of life, is already feeling the weight of her years on her body, but with an undying desire to do more for Jesus and for His Kingdom on earth. She was instrumental in spearheading a number of initiatives and foundations of her Congregation in our country,

including in our Archdiocese. What impressed me most in this wonderful Religious Woman was her passion for the Gospel and for its proclamation, particularly among the weakest and the marginalized.

St. John Paul II reminded us that a fire can only be lit by something that is itself on fire (*Ecclesia in Asia, 23*).



100th Birthday with Archbishop Filippe Neri, Bangalore

Johanna was a woman on fire, ever ready to take off on the most challenging missions, facing risks and dangers, and always eager to carry the light of Jesus wherever she went.

+ Filipe Neri Ferrão, Archbishop of Goa and Daman

It was way back in the seventies that I met Sr. Johanna, who came to Salgado, Goa, during the centenary of the church. Sr. Johanna had come to Goa in connection with the ancestral home of the Mendoncas. One of their daughters had joined the Holy Cross Sisters, she was a doctor. Her father wanted her to open a hospital in her ancestral home. But Sr. Lila Mendonca left the congregation.

Then a year after she developed leukemia and died. On her death bed, she asked her father to hand over the house and the ancestral property to her congregation. Sr. Johanna came to Goa. When Sr. Johanna saw that we were in Saligao she asked Sr. Francesca to take over the project of opening a home for the aged as one of the ventures of the centenary celebration of the church.

Sr. Francesca fell in with the plans and started the renovation. Sr. Johanna contributed a big sum of rupees twenty thousand for this project. For her, it makes no difference who does what, provided God's plan is carried out.

When I wanted to give away my house I wrote to Sr. Johanna that if she wanted to have it, she could do so. Sr. Johanna came herself, saw the place and she liked to have it. The old house was demolished and in its place now stands a new building, a much larger house where about thirty inmates are lovingly cared for by the sisters.

Sr. Johanna is a person of great faith and with a big heart, may God be praised for her beautiful life.

Sr. Nora D'Guerra, Congregation of Christ the King – (CK), Goa

25 January 1977 was the Golden day for Nanbhat parishioners and Atoli villagers. On this day Sr. Johanna, Sr. Preeti and Sr. Tara arrived in Atoli and stayed at Mr. Alex Rodrigues' House. They started their social work such as

K.G classes, health center, prayer groups, work with youth and some other social projects. In a short time, she had built two village community centers at Atoli and Bhati. After the completion of the Atoli village centre sisters came to stay at the Atoli centre. They stayed there till the completion of the convent building at Nanbhat. The social life of the people should be healthy, pleasant, and based on Christian principles if we wish to have ideal individuals in society. So for this reason Sr. Johanna established Samaj Vikas Prakalp, a registered trust with the motto of, 'One for all, all for one.'

Mr. Sebastian Dias, Parishioner, Nanbhat

Our paths crossed about twenty years ago in Goa. We were perfect strangers, yet we struck a bond of comradeship from the moment we met. I was amazed by her simplicity, tenacity, and flexibility of character. She responded courageously to the then need of the hour and in the true Christian spirit, she pledged the support of her community to the care of women and children

afflicted with HIV/AIDS. She has established a legacy of authentic Christian values for all those who dare to serve our Lord in uncharted seas. A true Christian warrior! Stay blessed Sr. Johanna.

Dr. Mina – Goa

I am Miss Josephine Barwa, a teacher in Holy Cross Girls' Higher Secondary School, Gholeng from 1985. I completed my studies at Holy Cross Girls' Higher Secondary School, Gholeng. It's my joy to acknowledge that I know Sr. Johanna from 1977 onwards. I had many chances to interact with her. She has visited my village Talora and has helped in building a village church. So I have many good memories and experiences.

Sr. Johanna was in Gholeng from 1957 to 1966, where she was the first Principal of Holy Cross School. She was committed, sociable, service minded, religious, cheerful, supportive, farsighted, well wishing, and was well equipped and knowledgeable of the current situation. She was a very good guide to the people in the socio-political sphere.



Sr. Johanna is a trailblazer of Grihini Schools for illiterate girls

She was a trailblazer of Grihini School for illiterate young girls. She played a key role in women's education in the entire area by bringing tremendous changes in their families and to the lives of women folk which has changed the face of society.

Her life was an inspiration, therefore many young girls were attracted to religious life and became Holy Cross Sisters. She remains in the heart of the people of Gholeng.

Miss Josephine Barwa, Teacher, Holy Cross School, Gholeng, Chhattisgarh

I met Sr. Johanna in Nanbhat as a novice. We stayed in a family in the initial stage. There is a deep longing in her to be a mystic but at the same time, a strong pull to action to reach Christ to as many as possible. So came the idea of Ashram life in Nanbhat, the first mission station in Vasai. We integrated prayer and action in the simplicity of life. She was a true Franciscan to be quick to ask pardon from her fellow sisters. As the poor is her first priority, they are to be responded to without



Many goodbyes and new beginnings

delay. When a fellow sister has responded aptly to the poor that is a big joy for her. Whenever I came back from the village tired she would pat or embrace me as though to energize me. For Sr. Johanna, there is no wasting of time in the community. Every second is precious and a lot is to be done. She believes that given responsibility together with encouragement the other will expand and achieve. Sr. Johanna can also approach the arrogant, miser, and stubborn, and get her work done, with her motherly approach. I have enjoyed, marveled, cried, rejoiced, and

prayed with her in wonder. What I am today is just because of my early religious life with her and I am indebted to her.

Sr. Gracy Thadathil, Holy Cross South province

I owe my religious vocation to Sr. Johanna who is my model in my religious life. I was touched by the total self-investment she has made by her super intellectual capacity, compassion for the poor and less privileged of the society, her daring spirit, zeal for the mission, and above all deep union with God. Her sincere love for the people led her to transcend above

all differences and hurry where the people called our congregation to be. She did pioneering work in most of the establishments. Living with her and seeing her interactions with common people, church, civil and political authorities have given me an opportunity to learn how to encounter people in our mission.

Sr. Jane Britto, Holy Cross South Province

I am so glad that Sr. Johanna has completed 100 years. I know her since 1990 when I became a Bishop. She was always



A community center bears her name

welcoming and respectful. I have experienced a lot of goodness, kindness and cooperation from her when I was in Vasai diocese. She became one with the local people and lived a life of simplicity and poverty. I have been greatly touched by her deep faith and selfless dedication. I love you dear Sr. Johanna. God bless you dear.

Bishop Thomas Dabre, Pune Diocese, Maharashtra

Rev. Sister Johanna is endowed with God's abundant blessings. Her determination and will power can move mountains. Sister has made revolutionary change wherever she went. Sister's love and dedication is beyond comparison. Working with her was my best achievement.

She is a blessing to mankind. Sister has worked for the betterment of people all through her life. A special loving mother to the poor and the needy. Sr. Johanna is the epitome of empathy and commitment to education and social work.

Maria Frantz, Clerk, Mira Road, Mumbai

Sr. Johanna, a great human being, full of love, energy,

kindness, hard work, highly disciplined and organized. Her words and actions are highly inspiring. Very fortunate to be associated with her, pleased to see that the seed sown by her in Mira Road i.e. Holy Cross School has grown into a huge tree.

Raj R Vaswani, Parent, Mira Road, Mumbai

The meaning of Johanna is “God is Gracious.” God has graciously brought her to a small hamlet of Nanbhat to take away the ignorance of the people and give them the knowledge of Spirituality. Even today the people of Nanbhat fondly remember Sr. Johanna for her passion and selfless service towards them. “As water reflects the face, so one’s life reflects the heart (Proverbs 27:19). Her reflection was left behind as she moved from Nanbhat. I am truly overwhelmed to write a few testimonial words about her.

Mrs. Irene Callistus Rozario, Holy Cross Convent School, Nanbhat, Vasai

I met Sr. Johanna of the Holy Cross congregation at St. Paul’s, Nanbhat in 1975. St. Paul’s was a tiny parish of 3500 catholic farmers. Sr. Johanna fell in love

with the poor yet tiny parish community and decided to work for their upliftment. She was full of missionary zeal in her approach to social work. She gathered thousands of Adivasi laborers and began the work of improving the fields on a “food for work’ basis. She approached the catholic relief services (Caritas) for grains, oil, sugar, etc.

Today this small farmers’ community has prospered in every way. Inspired by her missionary zeal, a number of boys and girls joined various congregations.

Fr. Michael D’Souza, 1st Parish priest, Nanbhat

It’s a great joy for me to write a few lines about my experience as a student of Sr. Johanna, the then Principal of Holy Cross Girls’ Higher Secondary School in Gholeng. As a student of High school, I had close contact with Sr. Johanna. As a Principal, she was very loving, kind, and understanding to the poor Adivasi girls. She helped them to complete their studies. She was punctual and strict. She was concerned about the welfare of all.



Four siblings: Sr. Johanna, Sr. Bernharda, Sr. Ignatia und Sr. Elisabeth

During the construction of the High school building, she worked with the girls and helped them to carry bricks and materials. She was moved by seeing the pitiable condition of the illiterate Adivasi women and girls and she wanted to do something for them. So she started Grihini school for them, which spread in all the parishes of Raigarh and Ambikapur Dioceses.

Sr. Augusta Toppo HC, Mid India Province

Sr. Johanna is the 'Mother Teresa' of Mira Road. I used to see her on a bicycle and busy constructing Holy Cross School in Mira Road.

Her dream came true with a new school building. I was fortunate to be in touch with her, as both my daughters Preeti and Neha were in the 1st batch. We made the Parents Teachers Association, where the welfare of students and teachers was always discussed. She is unforgettable. We wish her good health as a Centenarian.

Mr. Talreja, parent, Mira Road, Mumbai

When Sr. Johanna heard about my arrival at Mira Road she gathered a large number of parents who were seeking admission; she took me straight to

the office, made me sit on the headmistress's chair, prayed a short prayer, and sent the parents one by one for the interview. It was shocking to the sister who accompanied me but I took it well. She couldn't see any parent waiting outside. That was her love for people. She gave me full freedom to function.

She wanted discipline to the maximum. When there was a lapse she enquired why the noise or unwanted movements, wrote the findings in a paper and sent them to the teacher in charge to read and improve. In spite of the hardship I have worked very close

to her and learned much.

Sr. Neeta Alva HC, India South Province

I got the chance to know Sr. Johanna personally while I was in Mira Road from 1996 to 2000. She is a visionary and a person of deep faith. She is known for commitment and hard work. I may not be wrong in calling her the Architect of Mira Road Holy Cross School. She had a special concern for the poor and needy. She was also a great support to the Carmelite priests. I was lucky to associate with her and wish her good health.

Fr. Melvin D'Cunha OCD, Parish Priest,
Mira Road, Mumbai

In Memoriam- Sr. Zoe Maria Isenring †



Sr. Zoe Maria was probably known to most sisters for her presentations at congresses and general chapters, for her contributions to the Theodosia, for community days in various provinces, and in other religious communities. After her years of teaching in the Theresianum, she turned her attention to theology, especially Religious Theology. She was deeply committed to this. On the one hand she liked to show how women shape history and the Church, on the other hand she was never tired of pointing out steps for a new form of religious life. For years she had also been working on a comprehensive

history of the institute. A short but serious illness prevented her from finishing it. On April 12, 2022, she began her new life in the Kingdom of God, which she had loved so much.

For over 20 years, the sisters of the Province of Switzerland have been invited to write a personal life appraisal to be read at their funerals - with a "thank you" note added by the Provincial Leadership. We read from what Sr. Zoe Maria wrote:

"In the end, God speaks His most beautiful word to those who remove their shoes before the thorn bush, hide their tears, and stammer their supplications: O Lord, O Lord!"

Joseph Kopf

It is February 1, 2018, as I write these words. The theme for the day of consecrated life and the preparation for the renewal of vows on February 2 have motivated me to look back at my life. The first thing that comes to mind is a Saturday in September

1957 when I first read a book about religious life. The fact, that God loves me that we can enter into a spousal relationship with Jesus touched me deeply. Like Francis, I said, "This is what can satisfy me.

Two weeks later, a Capuchin priest was sent to Tanzania as a missionary. Once again I was very much touched, and I said to myself: I too want to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God. These two experiences have shaped my whole life: God as the center of my life and my service to people. Since I was born on March 25, 1938, the Feast of the Annunciation, Mary has always been a model for my vocation.

At that time, I was determined: I would enter a religious community. At first I thought of a secular institute, because I loved the world so much. But then the good experiences I had with the Sisters of Ingenbohl finally took over: I went with my decision to Sr. Eugenia-Maria, whom I admired very much and who, in turn, was pleased. She arranged everything for a visit and then for entry into Ingenbohl.

In the spring of 1958, I had to say goodbye to my beloved home in Laufen/Bütschwil, to my parents and six siblings, to my work and the employees at Heberlein Wattwil, to my friends, especially those from the gymnastics club and to beautiful Toggenburg. It was relatively easy for me; but I felt the loss later in the large, unmanageable community of candidates. Many things followed without my involvement: Secondary school, school-leaving examination, study of history and Latin in Fribourg and Bern. The novitiate was in between, and I said that it was a piece of paradise for me: I could pray; I could think, delve into religious life, and go to the novice mistress with all my questions. And then came the day of profession, where the joy in God, the connection with Jesus Christ, the love for the Church, the new connection with my parents and brothers and sisters were the focus.

Immediately after completing my studies in Bern, I began working as a teacher and educator at the High School Theresianum in January 1971. Even though some things were not easy, I was very

happy and satisfied to work with young people, encouraging, challenging and accompanying their human development.

In February 1982 there was another break that changed my life. A lecture on liberation theology opened new horizons for me. In the following years, a sentence by Dorothee Sölle left its imprint on me: "Once you set out on the path of the oppressed, you stay on it; to leave it would be a sin. But where were "the poor" for me? A long, painful search began, which initially ended with my leaving the school and starting a new course of study. A thesis on the crisis in religious life and how to overcome it brought me to the issue of life: the situation of female religious life in the Congregations. The study of theology gave me much joy, but also the experience of much hopelessness. But I always felt the inner certainty: God has led me on this path. And now, during many years in several communities, I have been able to give some orientation, some inputs for the shaping of the transition in which the religious communities stand today. I am

grateful to many sisters near and far who have set out on a journey of searching for a contemporary form of religious life.

My retirement life is filled with the study of our history. The work delights me very much, makes me enter into conversation with so many sisters who have gone before us, makes me understand a lot about the situation today. I very much hope that God will give me the strength and time to complete it.

Today, when I look back, I am grateful to God for my life and the path I have been able to follow. But I am especially grateful to the Superiors, and indeed to the entire religious community, that I have had the privilege of belonging to it, even though I was not an "easy-to-care-for" member. What would I be without the religious community of Ingenbohl? Now I am waiting for the "most beautiful word" which I hope God will grant me and which will put an end to much questioning, searching and not understanding.

A word of gratitude from the Provincial Leadership

Dear Sr. Zoe Maria, we feel confident that you have now been able to hear and experience the "most beautiful word" from God in a very concrete way. The Lord will also give you the reward for your being, and your tireless work, in the Kingdom of God. Your work has also left its mark on us. With many inputs you constantly invited us to stay on the path, to seek with you. Thank you!

In discussions, you shared with us your wealth of knowledge about our history and made us eager to read this book. When you were confronted with your serious illness, your great concern was whether you would have enough strength and time to complete the history of the Institute. Unfortunately, the course of your illness made this impossible. The

sudden diagnosis of your advanced cancer hit you and all of us very hard. In facing this situation, your deep anchoring in God was expressed. To the very end, we experienced you as a strong woman who, with trust in God's help, bravely said yes to the path of suffering. You are a great example for us. Thank you!

You have supported and shaped our community in our journeys together, in prayer and in being fellow sisters. We thank you for this and trust in your intercession with God, for there will be changes in the future of our Province and the entire Congregation. You have always faced them courageously. We carry your sweet memories in our hearts, and in this way you are close to us, and we to you.

Pledge

Make a pledge
to stick together
to the root
to the firmest stars
in the last heaven
you and you and you

Rose Ausländer, 1911-1988, German and English lyricist

The little poem "bond" by Rose Ausländer lives on images. After the first sentence, which speaks to a longing in us - who would not want to be so connected to another person that nothing can destroy this bond? -, the poet defines the scope of the bond and gives it infinite dimensions with the two images: "up to the root, up to the firmest stars in the last heaven".

"Up to the root: I stand by you, by your origin, by what you bring with you as hereditary property and prerequisite, by your history, by your mission, which gives you joy, but which can also become suffering for you. I stand by you.

"To the firmest stars / in the last heaven": I stand by you, by our plan with which you want to realize your desires, by your vocation which costs you the commitment of your life because it transcends you.

We stand together as creatures of



Photo: stock.adobe.com

this earth, as sisters of this community. We stand together in the struggle between our wretchedness and our hoped-for perfection. We stand together in the power of the Spirit, in the love of the Son, in the great mercy of the Father.

Only when the bond reaches that far is it strong enough that we do not give up in difficult moments.

Such a bond is not the task of a few. Rose Ausländer invites everyone to it with her poem. It is as if she were looking around and envisaging the individual, so that none is forgotten: "you and you and you".

Sr. Christiane Jungo

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