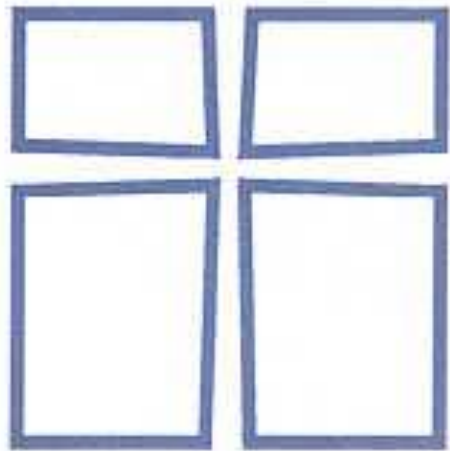

Theodosia



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

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Creation, glass window chapel, home for the elderly Brunnen
Sr. M. Raphaela Bürgi 1923-2021

Editorial

Theodosia's contributions also are as colorful as the summer. Diversity of members and diversity of works are a feature of our worldwide community. A diversity that it has become and wants to be treasured!

Like the delegates at the General Chapter 2022, we will be sensitized to a challenging theme: the re-founding of our community by Fr. Xavier E. Manavath, CMF from Bangalore. What is meant is the "re-founding" of the Founder's charism. In the second part of his talk, he raises fundamental questions which want to help us to search our conscience and to think in new ways. If as many sisters as possible allow this, many things can become new and point to the future: "Community - International, Intercultural, Prophetic".

In the series "You will be My witnesses", Acts 1:8, Sister Concordia Fischer is presented and honored as a pioneer and long-time 1st Provincial Superior of the Province of Styria-Carinthia. She is a living testimony from the founding period that cannot be forgotten. Sr. Maria Bosco Zechner is well informed about her biography.

The sisters of Ingenbohl and Menzingen have been working together more closely in India for ten years. This has given rise to the "Holy Cross Mission". The present secretary, Sr. Atmaja Poonoli, from the South India Province of the Menzingen Sisters, reports on the development and goals of the collaboration. This covers areas of health care, education policy, and women trafficking. We are very glad about this - and probably Fr. Theodosius, Mother Bernarda and Mother M. Theresa as well!

After twenty years, Sr. Agnes Maria Weber is still enthusiastic about her work in the Generalate Archive. Her favorite definition is: "The Archive, the Living Memory of Our Congregation". Her documentation gives us insight into a world unknown to most of the sisters.

Sister Leona from the Czech Republic Province has not only recognized needs of the time in her homeland, but has taken appropriate measures. The social services she initiated are a blessing for the whole region. That is why she is thanked: "Award Given to Sr. Leona Martinková". Sr. Daniela Švecová shares with us about it.

Three years ago the sisters were withdrawn from Perm (Russia). They continue to be in good contact with the people there. Sr. Katarína Jureková and Sr. Filipa Macháčková report "From the Present Life in the Parish in Perm".

In the last Theodosia, Sr. Mirjam Jerković introduced herself as the new General Treasurer. In her article, "Young People in the Convent Ingenbohl", we learn that she is not only interested in numbers, but above all in people.

The "Information from the General Leadership" include appointments of Provincial Leadership and information about past and forthcoming visitations or visits by the General Leadership.

Sister Christiane Jungo

Community – International, Intercultural, Prophetical

Presentation at the General Chapter 2022 in Altötting, Germany, Part 2

Fr. Xavier E. Manavath, CMF, Episcopal Vicar for the Religious, Archdiocese of Bangalore, India

Re-founding religious community

- How do we re-found a Congregational Community and thereby the Provincial and the Local communities in all its three dimensions, International, Inter-cultural and Prophetic?
- My concern, here, is to raise, rather, to help you raise, certain fundamental questions which we are often glossed over or even repressed in the busyness of our living as a community
- Let us begin with a very fundamental question. What is, rather, what should be “essence of a Religious Community” whether at the congregational or local level.
- This enquiry will have necessary implications in the way we live, organize ourselves and choose leadership and govern at the local, provincial and congregational levels.

1. Founders’ vision: The essence of a religious community

William James speaks of what he calls, the *strenuous mood*, foundational life energy, (the *eros*), the *libido* or a fundamental desire that lies slumbering in every human being.

The life energy (*eros*) needs to be awakened from its slumbering mode and for this the *eros* requires the wilder passions like, the big fears, loves, hates, indignations or the appeal of one of the higher fidelities like, justice, truth, or freedom.

For our Founders and Foundresses, the *strenuous mood* in them was awakened with two factors:

- faithful contemplation of the gospel
- sensitivity to their own social milieu

These men and women were fascinated by the person of Christ, felt drawn to him, intrigued and captivated by him, and felt deeply the ramifications of his life in their hearts. They felt the Christ-event,

not just as a historical event in the world's past, but as a dynamic reality **penetrating, subsuming the present, and challenging them to both mysticism and social action.** Their following of Christ, therefore, had also elements that are both:

- mystical - began in a contemplative vision
- political - overflowed into expression of love, mercy and compassion

The Christ-story, with its enormous range and depth, were dealt with by focusing on particular aspects and got reflected in the social milieu in which the founders lived. They saw areas of human life, where there was a crying need for the Christ-story to be retold. They went into the dark places of human existence, into its broken-ness, poverty, illness, ignorance, degradation, misery, and retold the story in words of proclamation and deeds of compassion.

They went in with the "mind of Christ" as described by St. Paul. "So if in Christ, there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the spirit, any warmth or sympathy, I appeal to you, make my joy complete, by being of a

single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind, everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests, but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2: 1-5).

- The heart of the story is the mind of Christ, recognized by the founder and still being communicated, discovered and created within the experience of the congregational community. This is where their life experiences and their original writings are important.
- The mind of Christ, then, is the enkindling experience. The heat thrown off from it will be felt in the unity of central convictions, the tenderness and in the community's life together.
- "Born not of the will of the flesh" nor from personal attraction, nor from human motives, but from "God" (Jn. 1:13), from a divine vocation and a divine attraction, religious communities are living signs of the primacy of the love of God who works wonders, and of the love for God and for one's

brothers and sisters as manifested and practiced by Jesus Christ.¹

As we come under the spell of these men and women (founders and foundresses), our vocation, (especially as the awareness of it deepens), is not to **imitate** but to **join this journey, to become part of the story**: We bring our inherited understanding and experience of the founder's vision and the plurality of our own insights, talents, and social consciousness in dialogue with contemporary needs and invitations to ministry.

Religious community, in its very essence, is this process of becoming united through the common experience of a core vision.

It means sharing the contagion, catching that strenuous mood, burning with the same fire

- means standing within the same story and looking at life from there. Community is this process, not a thing
- means being caught up in a movement
- organizing itself with the

necessary structures to live the vision

- and flexibly changing them when need arises.

- The aim of a religious community is to facilitate the process of life based on the original vision and on being moved outward by that vision. It is this fiery vision that unites the members
- The foundation of unity is the “communion in Christ established by the one founding gift.”

- Reference to the institute's founder and to the charism lived by him or her and then communicated, kept and developed throughout the life of the institute, thus appears as an essential element for the unity of the community
- To live in community is to live the will of God together, in accordance with the orientation of the charismatic gift received by the founder from God and transmitted to his or

¹ *Fraternal Life in Community*, 1.

her disciples and followers.”²

The quality of their bondedness in sharing this vision and translating it timely, contextually and relevantly is the essence of the community.

- A deepened understanding of the charism leads to a clearer vision of one's own identity, around which it is easier to build unity and communion.
- Clarity concerning one's own charismatic identity allows creative adjustment to new situations and this leads to positive prospects for the future of the institute.
- In this process, life will come to meet new and original moments for which there are no ready-made answers or responses.
- A lack of clarity in this area can easily cause insecurity concerning goals and vulnerability with respect to conditions surrounding religious life, cultural currents and various apostolic needs, in

addition to the obstacles it may raise regarding adaptation and renewal.

2. The thrust of a religious community

As we search for the major goal of a religious community and of the ways we live and organize ourselves, it is good to ask:

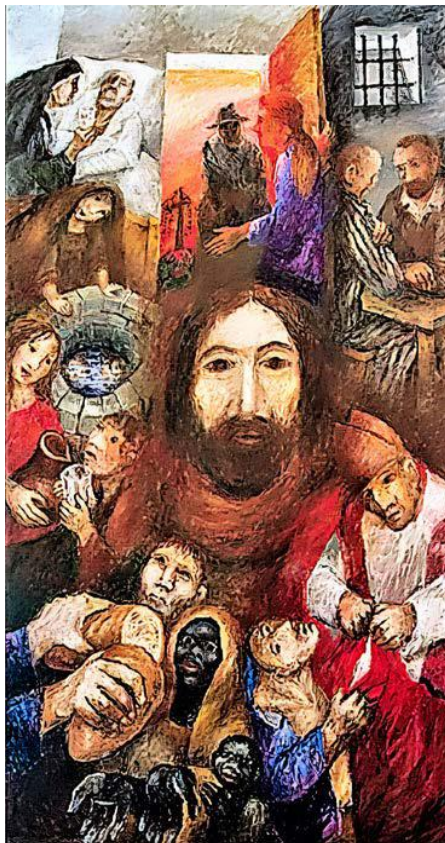
- What are the criteria that should guide us?
- On what basis do we structure our life and its styles?
- In other words, what should be the fundamental thrust of a religious community?
- Perhaps, it is better to begin by stating what it foundationally is not.

2.1. What it is not

- Creation of structures, rules and regulations, and insistence on laws.
- Simply a "community-centeredness," a "levelling collectivity without dynamism or inspiration" where the emphasis is on "being in community" and neglect evangelical responsiveness to the world around.

²*Fraternal Life in Community*, 45.

- Becoming "task-oriented companies" or action-oriented corporate presence (like multinational corporations where work and efficiency in execution are the prime values). Where work is important; activism dominates; and individuals are sacrificed to the fulfilment of the work. Members slip into careerism and professionalism, driven by cravings for status, power, glory and reputation. It is possible that a religious community structures itself in ways that aim primarily at the assertion of its own status, power, and reputation and removes itself and its members from the self-forgetful service of God in the world.³
- Just a "bread and breakfast place" where the emphasis is on personal ministries at the cost of the common living. Members legitimate it by stating reasons of space, location, travel convenience without



Symbolic image: Mystical and political!
 "Works of Mercy", Sieger Köder, Bruder-
 Klaus-Chapel Wädenswil CH

³ It is always important to see how a community structures itself: need for sharing and meaningful relationships, needs of everyone, and needs of the ministries undertaken, thus community becoming a base for doing personal ministries. Diversification of ministries

may coincide with diversified forms of community living so much so that we lose a sense of unity in the midst of a plurality of work and life styles. Please refer Mary Jo Leddy, *Reweaving Religious Life: Beyond the Liberal Model* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990), 64-65.

addressing to the aspect of "being in community." Is ministry all that counts? Are all our obligations outside? Is apostolate the only factor that counts? Have we no obligations to each other?⁴ Are we not called to live in community as others are called to live in marriage which entails not only obligations outside but also obligations to one another?

- Gratification of members (too much of caring, sharing, need-satisfaction) and becoming a "sentimental crowd." If we are always looking for our own equilibrium or for our own peace, we will never find it, because peace is the fruit of love and service to others. We should be concerned about the needs of the members and on the quality of the relationships that exist among members. But the fulfilment of these needs and the relationships exist not merely for our satisfaction. They must impel us forward to the fulfilment of our vision and mission. We can easily build a

closely bonded group with very heavy emphasis on loving and mutually satisfying relationships, and at the same time fall into a corporate "loneliness" a "bourgeois clique" that forces us huddle together in the dark for comfort.

- Safety and security (a kind of enclave for the weak and needy) with all fortification and protective measures.

2.2. What it is

- Fuel the charism of the founder not only by translating but also through inculturating it.
- Initiate a process of rediscovering and implementing the original vision in continuous dialogue with our times and situations so as to listen to the calls of the Spirit in them.
- Awaken in the members the same "strenuous mood" of the founder and encourage them to live it along with others who are similarly awakened.

⁴ Barbara Fiand, *Living the Vision*, 78.

- Burn with the same fire, being caught up in a movement.
- Formulate a **shared vision** (emerging from the original vision of the founder) which calls each member to worship and witness to the presence of God in the broken areas of human existence, according to each one's personal talents and aspirations. Do it at levels—local, provincial and congregational.
- “A visible and concrete manifestation of the communion which is the foundation of the Church and at the same time, a prophecy of that unity towards which she tends as her final goal.”⁵ A prophetic sign of the intimate union with God who is loved above all things and of sisterly fellowship through communion of life, prayer and apostolate, allowing different forms of it to emerge.
- To be a sign of the possibility of living Christian fraternity and of the price that must be paid to build any form of fraternal life. Moreover, in the context of



Symbolic image: Burning with the same fire. Image from the internet

the diverse societies of our planet - torn as they are by the divisive forces of passion and conflicting interests, yearning for unity but unsure of what path to follow -- the presence of communities where people of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters, and which remain united despite the inevitable conflicts and difficulties inherent in common life, is in itself a sign that bears witness

⁵ *Fraternal Life in Community*, 10

to a higher reality and points to higher aspirations.⁶

3. Implications

1. What really forms the heart of a religious community is the mystical dimension that binds the religious community to Christ, a mystical vision that emerges from a faithful and diligent contemplation of the Gospel.

Devoid of this, we inevitably come to forget the profound reasons for “making a community” and for patiently building fraternal life. This life and can sometime appear beyond human strength and a useless waste of energy, especially to those intensely committed to action. Hence prayer, both personal and communitarian, has to be considered the foundation of community life as it starts from contemplation of God’s great and sublime mystery, from wonder for his presence in the most significant moments as well as the humble and ordinary realities of our communities.

How fascinating has been our contemplation of the Christ story in its enormous range and depth? How faithful have we been to prayer, both personal and communitarian as a source of nourishment of our community and mission? If it has not been so, what are the reasons?

2. As a congregational community, we, though different, come together in unity - a unity of central convictions. There is a merging of individual stories, without losing them, into a larger story.

Are we prepared to merge without losing our individuality? Are we prepared to give and receive from one another as we are "differing gifts?" How do we feel about our abilities of listening to and acceptance of others? Are we ready to envision together?

3. The quality of the congregational community life is affected, positively or negatively, by two kinds of diversity in the institute: that of its members and that of its works. In both, the diversity is a variety of gifts which is meant to

⁶*Fraternal Life in Community*, 56



Symbolic image: allowing and nurturing diversity. "Eden", pastel drawing, Johanna Heimgartner, Meggen CH

enrich the one reality. The criterion for accepting both members and works in a religious institute, therefore, is the building of unity.⁷

"It is a mistake to try to make the founding gift of the institute to cover everything. At the same time, a gift which would virtually separate a member from the communion of the community cannot be rightly encouraged. Nor is it wise to tolerate widely

divergent lines of development which do not have a strong foundation of unity in the institute itself. Diversity without division and unity without regimentation are a richness and a challenge that help the growth of communities. It is a particular responsibility of superiors and of those in charge of formation to ensure that the differences which make for disintegration are not mistaken for the genuine value of diversity"⁸

Do we experience a unity of the members and of the varied works undertaken by the members in our congregations? Do God's gifts in this person or project or group make for unity and deepen communion? Is this a criterion that we apply in accepting new members and in the discernment of new apostolate that we take up? The motto of your founder: "The need of the time is the will of God" is still pertinent to us. ? "We choose our ministries according to our option for the Poor. By this we understand ministries with the

⁷ Directives for the Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious in the Church (Sacred Congregation for Bishops and SCRIS: Rome, 1978), 12

⁸ *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life*, (SCRIS: Rome, 1983), 22.



Symbolic image: stability and mobility. "Wheel icon of Bruder Klaus", Josua Bösch 1922-2022

marginalized, with minorities, of the variety of needs and the oppressed, less privileged hierarchy of needs in a given persons." However, how do you situation on the basis of the facilitate a discernment in the midst charism is crucially important.

4. If community is this process of increasing union in a common story, "all under the same roof" type of living (geographical or physical togetherness) is not a must. What is important is communion and not community and there could be different forms of celebrating communion. Moreover every charism must lead us to sharing it with others and build communion.⁹

Can we let go of the physical nearness and take the risk of loneliness and personal and individual responsibility for our lives as carriers of community? Can we create new ways of celebrating relatedness in community? How disposed are we to living in smaller, inter-congregational or inserted communities (forming more inclusive communion with those whom we serve) that are involved in shared mission?

5. We must constantly live the tension between fixity and mobility. The gospel view of discipleship frequently mentions a kind of nomadic detachment. The disciple is one who travels from one place to another, accepted in some, rejected in others, carrying neither purse, not scrip, not shoes, constantly in exodus, because the Word is to be taken to the ends of the earth.¹⁰

How do we resonate with the above view of discipleship? What are its implications for our lives as the members of our communities? How flexible have we been in relation to the members, works of apostolate and the places and cultures where the communities are situated? Are you comfortable with intercultural living? Are we open to develop a wider range by our willingness to re-position ourselves in different

⁹ One of the most striking phenomena in religious life of our time is the awareness of a "shared charism." We have become intensely aware how the gifts that give shapes to the various religious institutes are not only "charisms" for the religious life to be lived and explained within it but also charisms to be shared with other forms of christian and even non-christian

life. Please see "Theological Reflection on Mission Today" a Paper presented by Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes at the Mission Congress organized at Colemanar, Madrid from September 02-07, 2012, pages 35-38.

¹⁰ Section 5 and 6 deal precisely with the question of inter-culturality, placed, off course, in a wider context.

settings, regions, languages and in the midst of different needs?

6. To envision and travel together, we must be able to deal with pluralism within and beyond and refuse to accept a single way of looking at reality. Are we ready to ask the question: How else might we be in our world so that we can be more effective in responding to the mission entrusted to us?

Do we have symptoms of a tunnel vision and what are they? Can we think new thoughts, take risks, and delight in our diversity? What prejudices have we, perhaps, institutionalized, regarding leadership, members from other cultures, inter-cultural living etc? What stubbornness cries out for conversion? There could be unwritten and unexpressed fears and prejudices, preventing us from growth. We are an evolving reality. In another 5 or 10 or 20 years, what will this congregational community look like?

7. As we are in a process, we need to build structures that nurture our vision. "I wanted to organize this congregation in such a way that it fits in everywhere, finds acceptance

everywhere and be able to integrate itself into any condition and situation". We need to seek ways of protecting the values inherent in the vision, of keeping them alive and central. Structures, therefore, may **change, adapt, develop, outgrow their usefulness and relevance, and can be, sometimes, need to be replaced.** The vision will remain, finding new challenges to meet, more dark places to illumine, new stories in which to express itself.

Are we prepared for flexibility with regard to the structures of our community? Can we restructure our membership requirements so as to include those who are probably not ready for a long term commitment? Should perpetual profession be a necessary requirement for full membership? Are the structures of the communities (time schedule, rules and norms of community living, leadership models and styles of governance) life enhancing, dialogical and participative? What needs to be changed?

8. We do not have to over-sacralize the past. The present is holy too. Taking account of the tradition does not mean institutionally hamstrung

or getting stuck, ignoring the influences that impinge on us now and which our founders never envisaged. Neither does the need to be a meaningful presence now necessarily mean ignoring our inheritance. Our evolution, personally and communally, must take into account of all that we hold dear and holy in our past, all those learning from the past that need to be surrendered now as non-essential, and the invitations to novelty that call us out of the "then" into the "now."

Communally we are all lit from the same candle, and then on, every moment of our life derives light from that first spark. But the height, color, heat, and intensity of the flame depend on present conditions and our situatedness.

Our fidelity to our common bond must take account of both.

*What does this image evoke in us? How does the multi-religious-cultural-linguistic context of the communities of our Congregation challenge us? Are we open to study and research on more incultured expressions of the charism of the founders and foundresses who may have lived in a different historical period and cultural context? Can we not go beyond the *missio ad gentes* to *missio-inter gentes* model, looking for more incultured forms of living that provide space for a more meaningful dialogue of faith and life?¹¹*

9. When we seek unity, we should not look for a monolithic unity, but a

¹¹ In contrast With the "mission ad" model, the Federation of the Conferences of Bishops from Asia aims to transcend the model of *mission ad gentes* and establish the model of *mission inter gentes* (mission among nations) in order to provide a more incarnate model which is less deductive and linear. It would encourage recognition of religious pluralism not as something that must be fought against and overcome but as something that defines the picture or landscape of Asia. This does not imply the renunciation of the proclamation of

the Gospel. "The mission is not to be understood as confrontational but as a relationship and the building of relationships as dialogue and consensus, harmony and solidarity. The aim is for the Christian gospel and the Local churches to really immerse themselves in the realities of Asia and to commit themselves to a three-way dialogue concerning cultures, religions and the poor" (Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, "Theological Reflection on Mission Today," 34).

dynamic unity where, in spite of our differences on many things, we work constantly at the preservation of our central unity and the resolution of conflicts arising from our differences--personal, historical, social, psychological and intellectual. One of the most critical witnesses the world looks for from religious life today is evidence of people who do not hide in the enclaves of natural similarity, but who can find in our many differences a graced unity of love focused in a shared vision.

Can we disagree and still feel united? Can we be comfortable with differences? Do differences become an opportunity for us to receive and give? Even as we affirm our uniqueness, perceptions and abilities, are we also ready to accept and appreciate the uniqueness, perceptions and abilities of the other? Can we rise above our enclaves of natural similarities, based on region, culture and language and share the common vision?

10. In our journey forward, loyalty to the kingdom of God might perhaps be good substitute to loyalty to the

Church. This is simply because, all institutions, including the institutional church, tend to assume unilateral power that can slow and even deaden responsiveness. Blind conformity disguised as loyalty to Church may, at times, shield us from being a continuous and living reminder, a kind of *shock therapy*, to the institutional Church of its original purpose. This does not mean an angry criticism against the Church, but a sensitive thirst for gospel values that registers unworthy attitudes, practices and conventions, and refuses to adopt them.

Do you experience any conflict between loyalty to the Church and loyalty to the Kingdom? How do you resolve it? Are all your organizational structures, both internal and external more participatory, inclusive and gender sensitive?

11. We must seek new insights into the charism in order to discern new directions that are faithful to the deep story in which we are communally grounded. Returning to the roots must have a direct impetus for our present life together



Symbolic image: Spiritual life and its overflow in ministry. "The Juggler" in the city park St. Gallen, designed by Max Oertli 1921-2007

and its overflow in ministry. It calls for refined sensitivity to the times in which we live. This is especially so, because, in the words of J.B. Metz, religious life is meant to be a "kind of shock therapy instituted by the Holy Spirit for the Church as a whole" as it is called to offer prophetic criticism, avoid creeping passivity,

bourgeois prosperity and dubious provincialism.¹²

Are we prepared for these new directions, to enter into new dimensions of human existence where there is brokenness and pain? What about our "intouchness" with the times we live? Do we know where the marginalized are whose plight demands from our part hunger and thirst after justice? Are we brave enough today to take the raw and unpopular initiatives of our founders in new situations? Are we so comfortably settled within our own territory that we are so satisfied with what is instead of being constantly uneasy about what-is-not-yet-and-should-be?

12. Finally we need to move beyond the narrow enclaves of our own communion. *Fuga mundi* as lived in the desert was not simply a flight from the world, rather a protest movement against the false and compromised Christian living, developed from the Constantine era. It was an attempt towards a

¹² J.B. Metz. *Followers of Christ*, (London: Oats and Burns), 1978, p. 12-13. See also VC. 15, 87.

sacred spacing and a contemplative withdrawal to reclaim the space to purge out the idols of our inner sanctuary and to attain the purity of heart needed to look and relate to the others and world through the eyes of God.

Hidden in the evangelical counsels, therefore, is the evangelical call to a *transforming relational wholeness*. This communal consciousness is not merely about human beings and some new way of relating more intimately among ourselves. It includes all the other creatures who share with us the organic web of life, with planet earth and the universe at large viewed not as material objects but subjective organisms with which we relate interdependently.

In theological terms, the god who invites us to this new relationality is none other than the Trinitarian God of our Christian faith, understood however, not in the metaphysical

categories of the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era, but as **a foundational assertion of God's own nature as the ultimate source and energy for all forms of inter-relating, personal and planetary alike.**

How do you relate to this new transforming relational wholeness, inherent to the living of the evangelical counsels in religious communities? Call of Pope Francis to "be experts in communion" is an invitation to move beyond the narrow enclaves of communion and build communion with others—religious men and women from other religious communities, lay associates, people of good will from other Christian denominations and other great faith traditions and the different forms of life of this created universe—truly Franciscan. How do you resonate with this view of communion?

You will be My Witnesses, Acts 1:8

Witness of our time - Sister Concordia Fischer 1845-1922 1st Provincial Superior of the Province Styria-Carinthia

Sr. Maria Bosco Zechner, Graz, Province Europa Mitte

In the following we introduce sisters who have followed the footsteps of Jesus in their religious life and who have lived our charism in an impressive way. Today we get to know Sister Concordia Fischer and her various works in Styria, which are worth remembering. In her we meet a woman who still knew Mother M. Theresa, and who at that time went far beyond herself. She is remembered even today outside the convent.

Past history

Alexander Grillwitzer, the prior of the Cistercian Monastery Rein, had been able to inspire some young women who lived in community to take up the pastoral ministry as religious sisters. But he did not want to see them in one of the convents in Graz like Ursulines, Elizabethines or Carmelites, but in a new foundation of Father Theodosius, of which he had heard. The latter visited Rein Abbey in 1864 and promised to send sisters to Rein for a new foundation. After his death in 1865, five years passed before Mother Maria Theresa sent two sisters to erect a province. Sr. Concordia was added as a teacher with the remark of Mother Maria Theresa "I give my best sister to Styria."

Who was Sister Concordia Fischer?

Maria Anna Fischer was born on September 24, 1845 in Birenbach, Württemberg.

Dr. Wolfgang Leischner, a great-great-grandnephew of Sr. Concordia from Donauwörth, doctor and theologian, has intensively studied her life and spent with us and his mother a "Day with Sr. Concordia".

He said: "To deal with such a subject is not a hobby, it is to be interested in the family history, it is church history, but not only that, it is a true heritage. Biographies show successful lives, that is considered a testimony of faith. It is an incredible enrichment and inspiration. That's why Sr. Concordia has a place in my personal litany of All Saints, even though there is no official endorsement of her virtue."

With this sharing of the family and the records of the chronicle of Styria, we have tried to present a picture of this great Holy Cross Sister. Her origin is found in the baptismal register of Wäschenbeuren. The father Michael Fischer lost his young wives twice. From the third marriage Maria Anna was born as the 16th and the youngest child. Her sister Josefa as Sr. Juliane was a founding member of the teaching sisters in Menzingen. When the institutes separated, she went to Ingenbohl where she worked as a teacher. She brought her teenage sister Maria Maria to Ingenbohl for formation in 1861. In 1862 Maria Anna entered the convent and received the religious name Sr. Concordia at her initiation in 1863. She made her first profession in 1865, worked as a teacher and from 1868 as Novice Mistress at the age of 23.

Life and work in Styria

The impressive story of a great Sister of Mercy of the Holy Cross begins with her appointment in Styria.

We read in the chronicle from the beginning of her term of office: "In 1874, when Sr. Theresa Scherer, the Superior General, made another visit to her spiritual daughters in Styria, she appointed

Sr. Concordia Fischer as the definitive Superior of the Province, which later became also parts of present-day Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary".

At first, Sr. Concordia Fischer searched for a suitable site for the construction of a larger provincial house. On November 2, 1874, the move to Bruck/Mur took place, where the property Groß-Lichtenstein was purchased. Following the advice of Mother Maria Theresa to build the future Provincial House in Graz, she acquired a site in Kreuzgasse, where the first wing of the house was occupied in 1887.

It is hard to imagine that Sr. Concordia held the office as Provincial Superior for 42 years, 1874 to 1880 and 1886 to 1922 in times when so much was happening in Europe, in the Church and in the religious community.

In 1891 the re-election of the Provincial Superior took place, which from then on was held every three years by the sisters entitled to vote. She was unanimously elected as Provincial Superior each time, with great joy for the sisters, whose trust, admiration and love she possessed in the highest degree.



The Monastery Rein, around 1890

The expansion of the province took an unimagined upswing under her leadership, and also the enlargement of the property.

Special personality traits

Her **talents** were evident during the period of her formation and work in Ingenbohl. It states, "Her abilities, spiritual and personality traits were appreciated by the superiors." And Mother Maria Theresa Scherer gives the "best sister" for the founding of the Province Styria.

Selflessness in her work did not go unnoticed by the authorities. Regarding the Directress of the school in Bruck, it says: "The school authorities praised her as a woman of rare sharp intellect, yet so unselfish and simple in her nature." She was concerned about the matter at hand, not about herself as a person.

The **benevolence** was expressed in many ways, for example, in the setting up of soup kitchens for the poor and many social works. The first concern, however, was for the



Sr. Concordia Fischer

sisters. She left no letter of the sisters unanswered, where it was also about the very personal spiritual accompaniment of the individual.

Poverty and simplicity, which she had vowed, were especially important to her as a office bearer. In the festive sermon for her religious jubilee it is said: Poverty was a constant companion of the sisters, the congregation never possessed great riches. Even in the instructions for her funeral, she was worried that holy poverty is not violated.

Building, creating space for the needy and the sisters was an important task as concern for the people. The houses of the Holy Cross Sisters were characterized by sustainability, not baroque buildings, but Franciscan simplicity. Some of these buildings still exist today. Their care for people continues to live in them.

Money was needed to run the establishments, train the sisters, and much more. How does she feel about this? "I never prayed for money," she says, "St. Joseph was her heavenly treasurer," her minister of finance, so to speak. Sr. Concordia shows that dealing with money can also be a spiritual task, in the right way of dealing with earthly realities and being in contact with sponsors.

Leadership and guidance were her special talents. She knew how to guide the development and expansion in the right direction, so that many new things constantly flourished. 850 sisters took their vows during her time and 70 communities were opened in the 42 years under her knowledgeable and wise leadership, six of which still exist today.

A poem dedicated to her states:
*"Wherever our gaze turns,
Your love, your care is evident,
Your guidance has done good to us."*

She gave **testimony** as model of a true religious woman in her profession as concretization and unfoldment of the baptismal grace. In 1920, the preacher emphasized during the homily on the occasion of her jubilee that despite her sickness, she had made the effort to lead the congregation even in

difficult times. Gratitude for this is to be shown through faithful fulfillment of duty and imitation of her good example.

She also set an example of a truly humble, unassuming sister as she passed away. We read in the chronicle: "When death took the exhausted one home to eternal rest, the sisters were heartbroken to hear the news of her passing away very soon. The dear good mother left a big gap, she will never be forgotten".



Graz, sanatorium and provincial house, before 1912

She endured **suffering** in her life and overcame it by God's strength, above all by caring for and suffering with the sisters. At the end of her term she experienced the First World War and the changes in the province as described in the chronicle of October 1918: "Austria - Hungary, our dear fatherland has fallen apart! The other national states separate themselves from the Germans. What remains is a small country German-Austria! Now there will probably be much to fear also in the Province Styria, which has so many Slovenian sisters.

God help us! The soviet republic was declared in Hungary under the communists. How will our poor, dear fellow sisters live there?"

The war brought a dreadful time for the sisters, during which the mother who cared for them, assisted them. Sisters took over nursing care in military hospitals, epidemic hospitals and ambulance platoons. Many were threatened, homes devastated and destroyed. Gunfire and the threats of warfare caused great anxiety in many battlefields in the large province.



Bruck on the Mur, SR-Concordia-Way

People who tried to flee were taken into the monastery and other houses.

Her memory continues to live on

In the year 2020, we celebrated 150 years of existence of the Province Styria-Carinthia. While researching the archives and the chronicle, we found out Sr. Concordia. Since then we have tried to make her known as a pioneer for spreading the charism of the Holy Cross Sisters and as a shining example for us. She is still present in the works accomplished, for which she laid the foundation.

The city of Bruck/Mur was looking for important women who had achieved great things for the city and then they found Sr. Concordia.

She had made sisters available for the Civil Hospital, founded the boarding school and, at the request of Mother Maria Theresa, the Pius Institute, the first institution for the mentally handicapped in the monarchy.

The town formally honored her by dedicating the "Sr. Concordia Fischer Weg" to a busy residential area with a large children's playground.

Her importance was recognized by the public. An obituary in the Grazer Volksblatt on her death on April 25, 1922, stated:

"With this woman, the most generous and stirring religious Superior, inspired by unspeakable zeal for the good cause, has departed from life."

“Holy Cross Mission”

Collaborative Mission of Ingenbohl and Menzingen Sisters in India

Sr. Atmaja Poonoli, Secretary of Holy Cross Mission, Menzingen Province India South

Fr. Theodosius Florentini, our founder said, "The need of the time is the will of God". The time shows itself different possibilities for both our congregations, Menzingen and Ingenbohl to come together under the banner of love. The Holy Cross Mission in India » speaks of the joint efforts put together by the Provincial teams and other supporting members of 8 provinces of both Congregations to make various apostolates more meaningful and relevant in India. You will also get a glimpse of the flow of life among the sisters of both Congregations in a few get-togethers in Switzerland. Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril

February 15, 2013, the Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr. Theodosius Florentini, the Swiss Capuchin, is a day that got recorded in the history of the two Congregations of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross - Ingenbohl and the Holy Cross Sisters – Menzingen in India. Fr. Theodosius Florentini together with Mother Bernarda Heimgartner and Blessed Mother Maria Theresa Scherer founded the two Congregations in Switzerland.

Background

The Indian Subcontinent continued to witness daily, the increasing health care concerns of the people, especially the economically disadvantaged rural people. The promotion of wellness continues to be a very distant dream. The fast emerging industries revolving around health care such as the Pharmaceutical Industry, the

Diagnostic Industry, and the Hospital Industry continue to commercialize health care. Profit and Much More Profit has been the guiding principle for whom money is the highest value. In such a scenario falling sick, has become a liability especially because the vulnerability of the people who are sick, has come to be viewed as an opportunity for exploitation. Affordable, Rational, Compassionate, and Quality Health Care became unavailable to the common man. The Sisters of the two Congregations involved in Health Care delivery in India have been experiencing a lot of challenges due to the above cited reality. Sr. Prabha Varghese from the Central Province of Ingenbohl Sisters, the Executive Director of CBCI- CARD, during her official visit across the different states of India in the discharge of her duty, got an idea and an inspiration to initiate a dialogue between the two



The Executive Committee

Congregations bringing together all the Provincials and the Leaders involved in Health Care with the aim to find a way to counter the ill effects of the three major industries of Health Care, and more profit, much more profit attitude of the Health Care Providers.

On 25 October 2012, Sr. Prabha shared her dream through a letter to all the Six Provincials of the two Congregations. 45 Sisters - the Six Provincials and Administrators of the Hospitals - met together at Maitreya, Bangalore on 13 February 2013. CBCI-CARD was the initiative of the CBCI Health Commission and Rev Fr. Mathew Abraham, the then Secretary General of the Commission for Health CBCI, chaired the meeting and guided the entire process. On 15 February 2013, the leaders of

the two Congregations signed the Bangalore Declaration, institutionalizing the Collaborative Mission of the two Congregations, christening it "Holy Cross Health Care Mission". The Six Provincials and the Six Councilors, each of them representing the Health Care Mission in their respective Provinces, constituted the Steering Committee of the Holy Cross Health Care Mission.

Collating the data on the Health Care ministry from the Six Provinces was an eye opener, as the contribution to the National Health of India by the Holy Cross Sisters figured to be quite significant through the 31 hospitals and 24 health centers spread across the whole country with more penetration into the unreached and underserved rural



Founding of the "Holy Cross Mission"

areas. The realization that together there are 3600 in-patient beds available for the two Congregations paved the way to set up the Process of Common Procurement. By November 2013 the Central Office of Holy Cross Health Care Mission was set up at Maitreya, Bangalore with a full time Executive Director, Procurement Manager, and an Office Secretary. Seed Money to finance the initiative was contributed by each Province.

Training for "Transformation for Mission" was perceived as an urgent need to provide humanized, affordable, compassionate, and

quality care and Holy Cross Health Care Mission engaged a professional team to prepare the training module and to train the sisters from all the Seven Provinces as Trainers. 21 sisters got trained in 24 modules and all the Provinces conducted the "Transformation Training for Mission" for all the sisters as well as for the employees including doctors.

The Steering Committee got dissolved eventually and now the Eight Provincials constitute the Governing Council. There was a consensus to include all the ministries as well as the ongoing



Joint training for accounting and management

formation of the two Congregations and since then the collaboration initiative is renamed “HOLY CROSS MISSION”.

Accreditation for Hospitals and Health Centers has become a mandatory norm across the Country. As part of the Collaboration Initiative, Orientation training was conducted for sisters and staff for NABH Accreditation from 17 Hospitals who volunteered

to begin the process. It is encouraging to note that 8 Hospitals have already received Entry Level NABH Accreditation from the Quality Council of India and this will in turn help us to realize the vision of the Holy Cross Mission to provide Excellent Health Care to more people through solutions that bring costs down, increase access and improve quality thus delivering sustainable solutions to Health Care Needs.



Common course for sisters with 15 years profession

Response to the two “National Consultations” of the sisters involved in the Social Empowerment Ministry and Pastoral Ministry was overwhelming and jointly started to work together to involve specially on issues related to Human Trafficking. Other Congregations got to know about the collaboration of the two Holy Cross Congregations and a few Congregations benefitted from the experiences shared by Holy Cross Mission on their invitation. Hospitals managed by other Congregations and other Christian Organizations joined the Common Procurement of Holy Cross Mission and continue to experience the benefit of Collective Bargaining.

There have been a lot of efforts taken by all concerned to keep alive the Collaboration. The feeling of togetherness and the strength experienced is phenomenal especially during these troubled times in our country due to the withdrawal of high-value bank notes (Demonetization) and the implementation of a new tax system (GST). The meeting of all the Administrators, Purchase Managers, and Pharmacists of the Hospitals served as a forum to exchange their knowledge and expertise and provided an opportunity to share the lessons learned from experience.

The Collaboration in the ongoing formation has opened up the way for the sisters to get enriched by each other and to experience the



Common seminar for administration and management

unique life and mission of the different Provinces of the two Congregations. The Sharing of Personnel between the two Congregations in times of acute shortage and crisis is an unforgettable experience. The Institutional Training Facilities of the two Congregations are shared by both the Congregations and sisters and candidates return back with updated skills and expertise, increased vigor and enthusiasm, more zeal, and a broader outlook.

The involvement of Sisters in the Education Ministry is much more significant. Perceiving the challenges of the New National Education Policy which in many ways does not seem to align with Christian Principles, the Governing Council of the Holy Cross Mission,

in July 2018, organized the first Consultation with our sisters engaged in Education – 86 Sisters – who hold Leadership Positions in Institutions owned and managed by Holy Cross Sisters. An expert who practices courageously the Christian Principles enlightened the participants on how to stay alive holding on to our Vision and Values and on new models of education to combat the contemporary crisis. The group drew up HCM Education Ministry Declaration: on July 15, 2018. A Core Committee was set up with one member from each Province. The proactive and aggressive commitment of the Core Committee worked with coordination leading beyond face to face time and has been able to develop a Logo and a Theme



General Leaderships of Ingenbohl and Menzingen in Ingenbohl

“Holyan Trend Setters”. Holy Cross Education Institutions will be a learning space with high quality teachers to gift to the home, society, and country the Best Citizen. An action plan is actively underway to qualify the students who pass out of our Institutions to be proactive, manifesting Benevolence, Compassion, Social Responsibility, and Eco Care. The Institutions have embarked on a transformation journey from Fair to Good to Great to Excellent.

The Resources of Christian

Organizations have become the burning subject of intense scrutiny by the present Central Government of India. Therefore, the Governing Council in December 2018 conducted a Seminar for all the Provincial Procurators and Finance Managers of Societies and Institutions with inputs from experts. The enthusiastic engagement and involvement of the total 82 participants prompted us to conduct the Follow up Seminar in March 2019.

The written feedback received after all the important meetings reveals that the coming together of the Two Congregations was providential and the experience is very much enriching and rewarding for all concerned.

By now, the benefits of collaboration have begun to become visible, and a few Religious Congregations showed interest to hear about the “Holy Cross Mission” – the Collaboration

of Two Congregations. Since February 2013, Eighteen Congregations invited us to learn from the experience of the Holy Cross Mission.

The Theodosian daughters continue the journey with hope and courage and fulfill “The Will of God which comes alive through the need of the times” especially now with deeper involvement as we live through the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Visit of the Provincial Superiors of Menzingen to Ingenbohl during their Congress in Como

The Archive - the Living Memory of Our Congregation

Sr. Agnes Maria Weber, Archivist, Generalate Ingenbohl

Sr. Agnes Maria has been working in the Generalate Archive for 20 years. During this time she has not only gained a lot of experiences, but has also experienced many changes and completed exciting assignments. She is happy to tell all Theodosia readers about this. It is for us an insight into a rather unknown world.

What is exactly an archive?

You are now working in the archive? What do you do there the whole day? Does it have a lot of books? Isn't it terribly boring to always be sorting sheets and putting them into folders? What is an archive and why do you need one? These old things are of no interest to anyone. This is what I get to hear when I say I'm an archivist.

Yes, what does an archivist actually do? What skills does it require? Can I learn it? I asked myself the same question when, at the beginning of 2003, Sr. Clarens Helfer, my Provincial Councilor in charge at that time, asked me if I could imagine working in the Generalate Archive. I hardly knew anything about archives, I never had been involved with such things. Well, I told her, I could get involved, could at least try. I tried it, and I have never regretted it.

It has never been monotonous, and sheets have to be sorted from time to time, but that is only a small part of the work. And the many books can be found in libraries, not in the archive. And the purpose and importance of an archive is no longer a question for me. I was able to familiarize myself under my predecessor, Sr. Canisia Mack, and I was able to gain the necessary knowledge at a further training course for ecclesiastical archives. But I am still not sufficiently trained, new questions arise again and again, situations from past times unexpectedly become topical again.

What is an archive, after all? My preferred definition of an archive is: The archive is the memory of an institution. Our Generalate Archive is therefore the memory of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross Ingenbohl.



Sr. Agnes Maria in the new archive on the 2nd basement

The important things through all the years since our founding is collected and arranged here and should also be available for times to come. It shows who we are and what we do: our founding personalities and their work, our sisters in all their spheres of activities, the Leadership and how they carry out their tasks, the history of the world, the Church and the religious life, as far as it affects our community, spiritual foundations, constitutions, books on profession, correspondence, contracts, chronicles, general chapters, congresses, provincial chapters, minutes of meetings of

the Leadership, working groups, growth and decline of the apostolates, establishments, and provinces.

A short glimpse into the history

Archives are not a new invention. They first emerged mainly in the ecclesiastical sphere. The first ecclesiastical legislation was enacted at the Council of Trent in 1563. Parishes were obliged to keep baptismal and marriage registers. Popes were also very concerned about the preservation of important documents. For example, Pope Benedict XIII

issued an obligatory letter in 1727. Within 6 months, archives had to be established everywhere in Italy, namely episcopal archives, parish archives, religious archives, archives of pious institutions. Inventories of these archives had to be made. The archives had to be locked and looked after by an archivist. This letter is considered the very birth of the archives system.

In our Congregation, too, the concern for the preservation of important documents is evident at an early stage. In September 1910, Mother M. Aniceta Regli wrote:

*My dear, dear Sisters!
I have reason to believe that there are documents in the personal possession of individual sisters, as well as in the archives of parishes and institutions, which are of importance for our Congregation,*



Sr. Agnes Maria and Markus Näpflin on the day he assumed responsibility for the Generalate Archives

its expansion in the founding of the institutions, or in relation to our most reverend founder, Father Theodosius. Sisters certainly still keep letters from Most Reverend Father Theodosius and from the second Superior, Most Reverend Father Anicet, from Mother Theresa and Mother Pancratia, letters which contain interesting passages and give an insight into how the Most Reverend Founder and the religious superiors who followed him took care of the direction of the whole and the well-being of each individual sister.

It is very important to me to receive such documents, letters and notes either in the original or in a true copy. I therefore request all of you, my dear sisters, to check their writings and those of the institution to see if anything of the kind can be found....

Please send me the papers mentioned above by November 1 at the latest. These are to be sent to the address of the dear Assistant."

Thanks to the care of Mother M. Aniceta, there is material available in the Generalate Archive from 1844, the years preceding the founding of the congregation. After the content was sorted, the inventory was first preserved in offices. With the initiation of the

beatification process of Mother Maria Theresa in 1931, the need arose to sift through the existing material and to arrange it according to a well thought-out plan.

The ongoing process of beatification placed ever greater demands on the archives, so that Sr. Roberta Maria Bürkler, a historian with a doctorate, was able to assume responsibility as Generalate archivist in 1956 after intensive weeks of training in Rome. She fulfilled this service with great dedication until 1988. From 1984 on, Sr. Canisia Mack assisted her, and she continued the work until 2007. The requirements of the facilities were also ever greater. Archive rooms were planned in the west wing of the new motherhouse and could be occupied in 1969. At that time, there were comfortable rooms on the 4th and 5th floors, where the Generalate was accommodated. Who would have a spiral staircase in the workroom leading up to the upper floor?

Time-related changes

In the last decades, the demands on the archives increased more and more rapidly. Existing rooms were no longer adequate, and previously used materials proved to be unsuitable. Many things were

banned from the archives. Metal, e.g. paper clips and staples could rust and destroy the papers, plastic folders contained plasticizers and damaged papers, adhesives and rubber bands left traces of dirt and had to be removed. All documents had to be repackaged into archival, acid-free folders and boxes, and even the usual folders had to be replaced. Index cards had become outdated, and computers with archive programs had taken over. All documents in the boxes can be stored there. The rooms of the Generalate archive were also considered unsuitable, as they

were neither fire nor waterproof, and the temperature and humidity could not be controlled. Years of renovation of the archive are now completed. The main archive with the reorganized historical file archive is located on the 2nd basement, where it could probably withstand a renovation of the west wing. The previous rooms on the 4th and 5th floors of the Generalate have become the intermediate archive, where the important documents are preserved that are still needed by the General Administration, i.e. they are still too recent for the final archiving.



Handing over of the directory to Sr. Marija Brizar, Superior General, by Dr. Wolfgang Schaffer and Sr. Agnes Maria

Thank you

I would like to express my special thanks to two people. Without them we would not have achieved this goal. Sr. Marija Brizar made the restoration of the Generalate archive possible and accompanied the work for about ten years with great interest and goodwill. Dr. Wolfgang Schaffer, scientific archivist from Cologne, came to Ingenbohl several times a year. With high professional competence and much love for religious archives he planned, advised and continued the work. In November 2022, after delays due to the Corona pandemic, he was able to hand over a heavy directory with 840 pages to Sr Marija.

However, archival work is not only about preserving the precious tradition. An archive must also open up and make documents available for external and internal research, be it for family trees, anniversaries, high school graduation and doctoral theses, but also for the ongoing work of the respective General Leaderships. Some things that are valid today can only be understood if one knows how it came into existence, why they decided that way at that time and not differently. And it is always good when documents provide clarity in legal matters.

Working with letters of our founders

In addition to many individual inquiries about sisters, establishments, apostolates, in recent years there have also been inquiries for large projects. In the General Chapter of 2008, several provinces submitted the requests to make available letters and other writings of the founders. The Chapter decided to create a working group. It needed experts to sift through what was available in the Generalate archive, the archive of Menzingen, the Capuchin archive in Lucerne and the Diocesan archive in Chur, possibly also in various private archives, in order to translate the texts from the German script to the

present script, to work out the context. Thus the working group was formed with archivists from three provinces and two experts, historians, who were also good connoisseurs of Father Theodosius. The working group met for the first time in January 2010. An intense, as well as very enriching time started. It was a unique, strong feeling for me to hold in my hands the letters that Father Theodosius had written, letters to sisters, especially to Mother Maria Theresa, to ecclesiastical dignitaries. I could only marvel at the many letters from Mother Maria Theresa as well. All originals were written in German script, a script that is no longer written today and cannot be read by many. Also the spelling does not correspond everywhere to the rules today. In addition, our founders had often written under great time pressure, sometimes even on the road. It was not easy to read these originals and to copy them word by word and letter by letter. There were many silent sighs: Dear Father Theodosius, if only you had written something more beautiful! In September 2016, we had the pleasure of presenting our book "Impelled by the Need of the Time". 199 letters and writings, supplemented by explanatory texts and footnotes, give insight into the ideals and intentions of our founders.

199 letters, not 200, because the book does not want to round off, but to arouse interest. There are about 1000 more documents in the archive.

Time-related topics and interests

Another major project, but with it's sad background, was the collaboration with various commissions investigating the allegations of abuse against our children's homes. Chronicles, reports and letters were to provide explanations of how the children's homes were managed and how education was understood at that time. It is difficult to explain and understand yesterday's events with today's knowledge.

As an international community, we are also affected by political situations in the countries where our sisters live and work, as well as by wars and their consequences. Everywhere it is our fellow sisters who are affected, who suffer and need help. In various times of need it was certainly comforting to know that they were not forgotten by the Motherhouse. Many documents in the Generalate archive tell of these events and ensure that they are not forgotten.

Significant events in church history also leave their mark on the

archive. The resolutions of the Council demanded changes in the Constitutions, the liturgy changed, a new Book of Hours was introduced, even plans for the new construction of the convent church had to be rethought and executed. The celebrations of the profession and the profession jubilees were reorganized. The decrease in the number of priests required new forms and plans of worship. For years now, the decline of religious vocations in Western Europe has been noticeable in the abandonment of old familiar works. The archive, the memory of the Congregation, stores the events. Who knows, perhaps one day a doctoral student will use our files to compare the situation at the time of the 100th, the 150th, the 200th anniversary of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in Ingenbohl.

From retrospective to outlook

Interest in archives has increased greatly in recent decades. The archiving system developed, became more and more "modern", and the archivist became older and older. And with it, the worry about the archive became greater and greater. How easily a health breakdown could become a problem. I am grateful that Sr. Marija Brizar took the concern very seriously and sought and found a

solution. The Provincial archive had also been rather unnoticed and had been worked on under the expert direction of Provincial Archivist Markus Nöpflin, and he showed his willingness, with the agreement of the Provincial Leadership, to take over the responsibility for the Generalate archive as well. I am quite pleased with this solution, as I know that the

archives are in good hands. But I am not yet bored. All the rich photographic holdings are waiting to be organized and registered, and requests from inside and outside continue to take up a lot of space. In this way, the knowledge acquired over many years continues to be fruitful and helps in keeping the memory of our Congregation alive.

Award Given to Sr. Leona Martinková

Sr. Daniela Švecová, Provincial Superior, Province Czech Republic

It is not everyday that a religious is honored by the state. Sister Leona has initiated in her district of Olomouc social services, which have become a blessing. So we join in rejoicing with her and all those who have benefited.

The way to it

"Thus God leads us to various places to work for his honour and for the good of the people." Fr. Theodosius.

Together with Sr. Leona Martinková we rejoice over her

very extraordinary achievement. She received an award from Prof. Vlastimil Válek, the Czech Health Minister, for her contribution in the field of social-health on December 4, 2022, at Prague Castle, the headquarters of the Czech President. The award was proposed by the Olomouc District



Sr. Leona with the Health Minister



Sr. Leona with the award

Administration, that means Sr. Leona was awarded as a religious sister outside the church environment, and that is extremely valuable for us.

Sr. Leona has been assigned to Caritas in Olomouc for several years (2005 - 2009 and again since 2018). Here she established an outpatient clinic with a general practitioner for the homeless in 2007. In 2020, a psychiatric outpatient clinic followed. Since

2019, she has led a specialized home-based palliative care service that operates almost in the entire district. The Olomouc District Management highly appreciates these services and therefore nominated Sr. Leona for this award by the Health Minister.

Here are a few words from Sr. Leona herself about her outreach: "The homeless have always been very close to my heart and whenever I work directly with them,

I am so happy. Our Lord often sees me in various leadership roles where I can't always continue my desired outreach. I never really wanted to be assigned in the health sector, I studied social work and took a special psychotherapeutic training so that I could be placed among the homeless. I could repeatedly experience that by remaining open to God's will and taking up even difficult tasks and challenges that no one else wants to take up, I can follow our Lord Himself as He realizes His plans little by little. Every life experience will be useful later in some way. For example, when I was studying social work, Sr. Carol Crosby from the General Administration at that the time, helped me get an internship in London. There I was able to learn about the services for the homeless "The Passage" that the Vincentian Sisters provide. Even

though I could spend only a few hours here, I was so deeply touched by this day care center and the practice for the homeless that I started a similar center in Olomouc immediately after my graduation. Of course, I experience not only ups and downs, but also misunderstandings. However, our Lord always finds ways to make many things happen. You just have to be constantly ready for the changes and remain open to the needs of the time."

And what was Sr. Leona's own experience of receiving the award? "I see it as an award for all our service teams. A team accomplishes much more than a single person. When we join together for a good cause - the doctors, nurses, social workers, etc., - God's love can flow into the world through us."

From the Present Life in the Parish in Perm

Sr. Katarína Jureková, Province Slovakia and Sr. Filipa Macháčková, Province Czech Republic

We could pursue with interest the mission of our sisters in Perm for 19 years. Unfortunately, this mission had to be stopped. Today the sisters tell us about the sufferings and zeal of their former parish community.

In November 2020, our community in Perm was closed and we returned to our Provinces. Many of you still contact us and ask how the people in Perm are doing. Certainly interest is greater because of the war situation. We would like to thank all of you for continuing to accompany the parish community in Perm with your prayers and contributions.

“God’s ways are not our ways and the thoughts of God are not our thoughts.” We have convinced ourselves of this and we are still convincing ourselves of this. Nineteen years of our ministry in Perm were in the spirit of our Constitutions, Article 69: “Our service to people consists ultimately in this, that - celibate, poor, and obedient we are available to them and walk with them according to the will of God.”

In Perm we had experienced several difficult moments, but also much joy, in the midst of an open and friendly community of Catholics and other residents of the city. God, however, is directing history according to His plan. A new time of trials for this people has dawned. The difficult “bad news” came as a test for this young parish community.

The termination of our activity in Perm was planned and prepared with the parish community a year in advance. We tried to prepare the members of the parish to work independently from us. At that time, we did not know what the parish community in Perm itself would have to go through. It was a painful shock for the people in the parish when they learned that we would be leaving Perm. Gradually, little by little we began to hand over

to them the responsibility of what we were doing. It was a challenge for us and for them, because the Covid pandemic began with various restrictions.

However, the parish experienced several more pains. Also, the Mother Teresa Sisters, who had been in Perm for a year longer than we had, were suddenly withdrawn from Perm by their community. They left a large part of their house empty, and the parish at the same time was concerned about what to do with the rooms that were badly in need of renovation.

Another "bad news" for the parish was the transfer of the chaplain, for whom there was no replacement due to the shortage of priests. He left the parish a few months before us.

The last painful news was that a year after we left the parish, the Archbishop also called the parish priest – Fr. Dimitrij back from Perm and transferred him to Moscow. The parish priest was very pleasantly surprised by the reaction of the parish community. They received the news of his transfer maturely and with great

understanding for the Church as a whole. The parish did not force any change in the decision with the Archbishop, but accepted the situation as their cross. With the understanding also for Fr. Dimitrij, who is young and still needs to grow. For some reason the priest who was to replace Fr. Dimitrij refused the transfer a few weeks before his arrival in Perm. Thus, the parish is now without its own priest for the second year.

Fr. Dimitrij is the parish priest in the cathedral in Moscow and also continues to be the parish priest in Perm, 1200 km away. He tries to find a priest for Perm at least once a month so that the people there can celebrate Mass and receive the sacraments. When the Archbishop comes to Perm, the people there always wait for him, hoping for the news that they will get a priest. On other Sundays, when there is no Mass, a Liturgy of the Word is celebrated. It is led by a layman who has been assigned by Fr. Dmitrij. People still come to church and the choir sings.

On Fridays during Lent, the parish has also organized a Way of the Cross devotion. Despite various

difficulties, the parish continues to function. It is still a small mustard seed of unexpected vitality. Of course, there are some who find these trials difficult to bear and whose seats in the church are empty for the time being. But there is an admirable group of people who have persevered. There are also new young people coming in. Fr. Sergey, the rector of the seminary in St. Petersburg, was there this year to celebrate Easter. As people from Perm parish wrote to us, the rector, Fr. Sergey, praised them that in Perm, even without a priest, everything was

beautifully prepared for the celebration of Easter. The church was cleaned, decorated, the altar boys prepared for the celebration of the liturgy, the choir sang beautifully, and to enjoy the time together after Mass, there was even an agape.

We see in the difficulties and sufferings of Good Friday, the seed for the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Let us continue to accompany the parish community in Perm, Fr. Dimitrij and the entire local Church with our prayers.

Young people in the convent, Ingenbohl

Sr. Mirjam Jerković, General Treasurer, Ingenbohl

In addition to her responsibilities as General Treasurer, Sr. Mirjam devotes herself to a deep interest: the spiritual accompaniment to young people. We are glad to listen to her as she shares her experiences with us.

On the last Thursday of each month, about twenty young people come to the crypt of Mother Maria Theresa. The lights are dimmed, you hear voices, guitar sounds and singing. What is going on? A meeting of young Croatian people takes place here, behind the walls of the convent. These meetings can take different forms, but they usually consist of three basic units. The first part deals with a topic

attractive to young people, for example, from the fields of dogmatics, morality, spirituality, frontier issues of science. In dealing with these topics, it becomes clear that young people are great seekers of truth. This is also reflected in the discussion, the interaction and the multitude of questions that the young people ask.



We have certainly heard the saying that theology should be studied on your knees. Therefore, young people are given not only the opportunity to know about God, but also the opportunity to get to know the one about whom they have heard. Thus, the catechesis is followed by half an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. It is beautiful to see kneeling and some young people remain on their knees throughout adoration, even though they have been told that they do not have to. The young people open their hearts before the Lord in song and prayer, often tears flow, and many speak about the peace that Jesus enfolds them.

In the beginnings of the church, the custom of agape was known. The

first Christians knew very well that the fellowship around the spiritual table must find its continuation at the physical table, in the common meal. The young people follow the example of the young church and then go to the Maria Theresia House for a social gathering: singing, playing and eating. Everyone brings something, and the young women like to treat us to delicious cakes. It is not the favorite part of the evening, but everyone enjoys it.

This is how the meetings of the young people on Ingenbohl Hill go month after month. I believe that the Lord richly endows their hearts and makes them grow in age, wisdom and grace. It is wonderful to observe this and to rejoice in the Lord.

Information from the General Leadership

Appointments

Confirmation of the appointment of the Provincial Leadership of the Czech Republic on 04 June 2023.

The General Leadership has appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province Czech Republic for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior: Sr. Daniela Švecová
2nd term
Assistant: Sr. Tobia Matějková
Councilors: Sr. Bernarda Lacinová
Sr. Iris Pabelková
Sr. Leona Martinková

Official start: 08.12.2023

We sincerely thank the new and reappointed sisters of the Provincial Leadership for the Province Czech Republic for their readiness for this demanding task. We wish them strength, courage and confidence for the assigned task and pray that God's blessing may accompany them.

We also express our sincere thanks to Sr. Emanuela Vévodová, the outgoing Provincial Councilor,

for her dedicated service for the good of her fellow sisters and the province, and wish her all the best and God's abundant blessings upon her future work.

Confirmation of the appointment of the Provincial Leadership for Switzerland on 20 June 2023.

The General Leadership has appointed as Provincial Leadership for the Province Switzerland for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior: Sr. Tobia Rüttimann
3rd term
Assistant: Sr. Rebekka Breitenmoser
Councilors: Sr. Eva Teresa Zanier
Sr. Dorothea Jaros
Sr. Danièle Perrier

Official start: 31.10.2023

We express our deep gratitude to the new and reappointed sisters of the Provincial Leadership of the Province Switzerland for their willingness to take up this demanding task. We wish them strength, courage and confidence for the assigned task and pray that

God's blessing may accompany them.

We sincerely thank Sr. M. Monika Hutter, the outgoing Provincial Councilor, for her committed service for the good of her fellow sisters and the province. We wish her all the best and God's abundant blessing upon her future work.

Visitations

General visitation in Vicariate Uganda

From 21 April to 17 May 2023 the first General Visitation of the new General Leadership took place in the Vicariate Uganda. Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönerberger, Superior General, Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril and Sr. Pratima Minj conducted the visitation. The theme of the visitation was: "Moved by God's Spirit, sustained by His infinite love, we shape the future together".

General visitation in House USA

From September 13 to 26, 2023, the visitation will take place in House USA. Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönerberger, Superior General and Sr. Dorothee Halbach will conduct the visitation. Thereafter, Sr. Marie-Marthe and Sr. Dorothee will participate in a conference in

St. Louis, Missouri from 27 to 30 September. This meeting will include various presentations and workshops on topics related to law, structures, and the future of religious orders.

General Visitation in India East Province

The General Visitation will take place in India East Province from October 16 to November 10, 2023. Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönerberger, Superior General, Sr. Roseline Kujur, Sr. Pratima Minj, Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril and Sr. Dorothee Halbach, will conduct the visitation.

Meeting with the Provinces of India Central, India North East and India South in Delhi

Following the visitation, the whole General Leadership will be in Delhi from 11 to 15 November for the meeting with the Provincial Leaderships of India Central, India North East and India South.

General Visitation in Mid India Province

The General Visitation will take place in Mid India Province from 16 November to 10 December 2023. Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönerberger, Superior General, Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril, Sr. Gabriele Schachinger, Sr. Roseline Kujur,

Sr. Pratima Minj and Sr. Rahela Lacković will conduct the visitation.

Visits

Visit to the Vicariate Brazil

Sister Gabriele Schachinger visited the Vicariate Brazil from 24 April to 10 May 2023.

Visit to the Province Italy, Bolzano and Cornaiano

Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönenberger will visit the sisters in Bolzano and Cornaiano at the end of August. This spring, the sisters moved from the Marienherberge in Meran to the Jesuheim in Cornaiano, which is run by the Fondazione Santa Elisabetta. The sisters are able to live in the Jesuheim as a community. Depending on their health situation, they are cared for and accompanied according to their needs.

Quarterly
of the Sisters of Mercy
of the Holy Cross
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