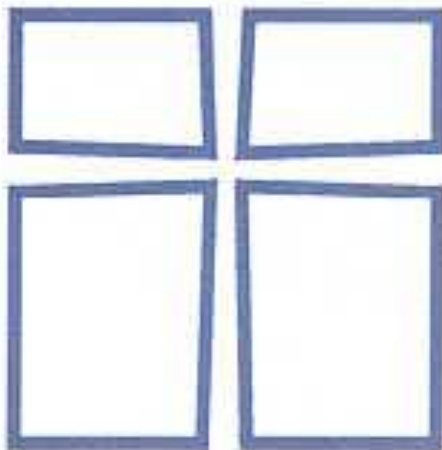

Theodosia



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Painting of Mother Maria Theresia in Theresianum, Ingenbohl

Editorial

It's late autumn: Harvest, review, gratitude! The articles in Theodosia are also centred around these themes.

Remarkably many anniversaries have interrupted everyday life: Life stories of sisters with their struggles and fulfilments, chapters of the institute's history that tell us about the needs of the time. Many reasons to be grateful!

We also learn details from the 'Provincial Superiors' Congress' that extend well beyond the official letter from the beginning of October.

And what would a year be without 'Motherhouse Visits'? For the sisters selected from the provinces in the Czech Republic and throughout India, it was more than just a geographical journey: Rich experiences of encounters with fellow sisters and the roots of our community, impulses in 'holy places', beauties of the countryside, etc.

The Switzerland Province shares with everyone the joy that brothers are now also living on the convent hill: Fathers and brothers from the community of the Holy Family.

The 'Information from the General Leadership' give us an idea of how demanding the days and tasks of our sisters in leadership are. A reason to thank and pray for them!

Sr. Christiane Jungo

Provincial Superiors' Congress in Ingenbohl

Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönenberger, Superior General, Ingenbohl

The Provincial Superiors' Congress was held in Ingenbohl from 27 August to 6 September. In her letter of 1st October to all the sisters, Sr. Marie-Marthe already reported on the proceedings and the topics discussed. For Theodosia, she writes what was also important to her.

Themes

Dear Sisters, during this Provincial Superiors' Congress we dealt with the tasks that the General Chapter 2022 had entrusted to the General Leadership. We discussed the results or interim results of the three working groups: (1) Structures, (2) Networking and (3) Location. While the two working groups on Networking and Location have completed their work, the working group on



Intensive work

Structures will continue to work on the considerations of the congress participants and discuss them further at next year's conference with the Provincial, Vicariate and



Group photo in the convent garden

House USA Superiors.

For the fourth task from the General Chapter, “Our self-understanding – our identity”, you were all asked to reflect in your Provinces, Vicariates and the House USA on the life and work of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in the here and now of everyday life. During the Congress the resulting impulses highlighted our self-understanding and our identity as Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in different countries and contexts. This question accompanied us until the final day on 6th September, 2024.

Symbols

During these two weeks, various symbols guided us, connecting us to our past, present and future.

1. *Mother Maria Theresia's room or office door* illustrated the threshold experience in her time. Many concerns, some beautiful, some painful, found their way into her office. Despite her many worries, she kept setting out to visit the sisters in their places of work and to discuss issues concerning the flourishing congregation with



Former door of Mother's office
M. Theresia

advisors and authorities. But her door was also always open to her fellow sisters, with whom she maintained a lively exchange.

2. The *soil brought from the Provinces, Vicariates and the House USA* symbolized the work of our sisters in the wide world. Even though we live in different countries and on different continents, we share a common vocation to work in the Kingdom of God. This common vocation and our common spiritual roots have

strengthened and motivated us to walk the path into the future together.

3. The *candle with the inscription 'Living from the source'* burned daily. It was like a symbol of the fire that God has kindled in our hearts and strengthening us daily with his power and keeping us burning.

4. The *light cross* had been created especially for the congress. It is intended to remind us that our lives as Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross should be characterized by love and devotion. With Mother Maria Theresia we can say: 'In the cross there is salvation'. Even if our failures and setbacks are painful, we can also be grateful for the many good things that we have been able to achieve by the grace of God.



Light and soil from all provinces, vicariates, House USA



Light cross and bookmark; Looking at HIM, seeing the world through HIM

5. During the Retreat Day, we looked at a picture of the cross entitled 'Looking at Him – Seeing the world through Him'. As Holy Cross Sisters, we are called to 'look up to Christ, from whom all strength proceeds' (Mother Maria Theresia). And through Christ we can see everyday things in a new light.

From the combined work

The theme of the Provincial Superiors' Congress was 'Continuing the General Chapter – the Congregation on the threshold'. Standing on the threshold means to consider whether we want to stand still, or turn back, or take the next step

forward. We leave behind what is familiar and turn towards the unknown.

Our congregation is on the threshold. We need courage and strength to cross the threshold. Together we want to walk by looking at the cross and live according to our charism in each of our Provinces, Vicariates and the House USA.

We look to the future with concern and yet with hope, knowing that we are being carried by God's infinite love. This is where the two terms adventus and futurum are fitting. In our daily walk, we experience the adventus, that which is coming towards us. We shape the future,

or futurum, by faithfully living out our vocation day by day. What is it, that unites us sisters through all these decades? It is our love for the Crucified Christ. I don't want to gloss over the reality. The situations in which we live today are not easy. We are not experiencing paradise on earth. None of us is perfect. But we don't have to be. Mother Maria Theresia tells us again and again even today: 'Do what lies in your power, day after day'. It does not have to be more. God will take care of the rest.

God has called us to this time. We are proud of the name of our Congregation: Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. For us, this name



Offertory in the convent church



Outing, former school building of Mother M. Theresia in Oberägeri

defines our identity and our mission. As human beings, we are not immune to failure and weakness. The same applies to our Provinces, Vicariates and the House USA. We are followers of Jesus. We are followers of St. Francis of Assisi. And we follow in the footsteps of Father Theodosius, Mother Maria Theresia and all our deceased fellow sisters.

On the occasion of our visitations and visits, our video conferences and written documents, we sisters of the General Leadership were able to realize that our charism is lived in all the Provinces and Vicariates and in the House USA.



Reception at Wurmsbach Convent

Each region has its own way of life, its own definition of being a Holy Cross Sister and of what a Holy Cross Sister stands for. But what they all have in common is the desire to be there for people in need. We feel loved, called and sent by God.

When I look at our Congregation today, at all of you, dear sisters – I am infinitely grateful. We have challenges to overcome for the future – but God is walking with each of us. We can trust Him. I would like to encourage all of us here to open our hearts and ears to one another trusting in God and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us rejoice that we are living in the here and now and that we are called to serve the Congregation.

You will be My Witnesses, Acts 1:8

Witness of our time - Sr Emilija Šerer, born in 1921, professed in 1944 Đakovo, Province Croatia

Sr. Amadea Birovljević, Đakovo, Province Croatia

At her advanced age, Sr. Emilija is not only a witness to the Gospel, but also a witness to the times and the history of the Institute. In a interview with a young fellow sister, she gives us an insight into her rich history.

Foreword by Sr. Amadea

On the occasion of Sister Emilija's 80 years of religious profession and 103 years of life, I had the opportunity and honour to spend time with her. She was glad to tell me about her life, her vocation, the difficulties, but also the joys and beauties of her long religious life. This interview was recorded and broadcast by Radio Maria in the programme 'I serve God'. I am publishing parts of it here in written form as an interview. May it be an incentive for all of us and a sign of gratitude to God for all that he has done and continues to do through our Sr. Emilija.



Interview with Sr. Emilija

Let's start with a question: how are you?

I'm doing very well! I've never been better than I am today!

Please tell us something about your life, where did you grow up, when did you feel the call to religious life?

I grew up in Tomašanci, Croatia. My parents were: Father Adam and mother Eva. We were seven siblings, but five children died at an early age. After the fourth grade of primary school in Tomašanci, I was allowed to attend the so-called citizens' school run by the Holy Cross Sisters. That's where I got to know the sisters. I still remember everyone who was good to us and whom we liked. I also remember those who were very strict. When I think about that time today, I realise that the strictness at that time was good for us children. In fact, even very good. Later, when I was in the formation and did further

training, I realised that it was actually the strict sisters who taught us the most. The teacher who taught the Croatian language, for example, was very strict. The children were afraid of her. When I did the teacher training, I didn't have to learn the grammar at all because we were already taught by the sisters.

So did this strictness not stop you from aspiring to become a sister?

Well, this strict sister didn't really inspire me to join the convent, but we also had a sister, Amadeja Pavlović, who was kind and friendly and whom everyone loved very much. She taught Geography. I would later have more contact with this sister (as Provincial Superior). When the Second World War broke out, she took care of us all, who had been displaced, robbed and dispossessed. She treated us with compassion and kindness.

How was the situation when you joined the convent?

At that time, there was still a so-called small and large boarding school with more than 20 girls. My group was in the so-called small boarding school. This was for girls who had to pay less for their accommodation. In the large boarding school there were well-to-do girls who could pay more. Three to four girls shared a room. We at

the small boarding school were given simpler food than the others, but it was healthy and always freshly prepared. We were looked after very well.

Was it sometimes difficult for you during formation? Did you ask yourself whether you were able to persevere?

As a candidate, I studied at the teacher training in Zagreb. Then came the novitiate. We were 16 novices at the time of our initiation. The novitiate was strict. We were not allowed to talk to our parents or relatives after entering the novitiate. We lived in seclusion. Sister Amadeja Pavlović, the then Provincial Superior, sought advice from Cardinal Stepinac, with regard to the habit, whether we should keep it or give it away. He advised us to keep the habit. (The mayor at the time had suggested to Sister Amadeja in a conversation that the sisters would have to give up their habit if they had to continue working in public hospitals or other institutions. I remember how she once entered our refectory and said with tears in her eyes: 'They have taken everything from us, now they want to take away our habit too, but we won't give it away! Anyone who wishes may wear a civil dress, but our attitude is that we keep our religious dress.' So we Holy Cross Sisters kept the religious dress.

We also wore the habit as students. Nobody was bothered by it. On the contrary, we were welcome everywhere. Our classmates and other people treated us with respect.

You mentioned Mother Amadeja. What else do you remember: what was she like in personal encounters?

A caring mother! She radiated calmness in class. I can't remember any child that she didn't respect or love. She was always friendly and encouraged us. When the hospital in Vukovar was nationalised after the Second World War, she remained wise in her leadership role and took care not only of our physical well-being, but also of our spiritual well-being. It was important to her that we remain faithful to God. I have very fond memories of her, of her kindness and goodness. She loved every sister and we felt that she cared for us.

You kept a little picture that Mother Amadeja gave you for a very long time.

The Directress of the candidates wasn't so convinced by me because she knew that I liked to dance and was cheerful. She also knew that my father had already made other plans for me. Therefore, she was of the opinion that my father would not allow me

to stay in the convent. For these reasons, she wanted to test me and transferred me to Osijek to a very strict local Superior. Sister Amadeja was already in the provincial leadership at the time and heard from other sisters how I was doing. She sent me a little picture and wrote on it: 'Dear Barica, may Jesus be your strength and comfort. He will help you to achieve what we expect of you. Sister Amadeja.' I kept this little picture for a very long time. What she wrote stayed deep in my heart.

After completing your studies in Geography and Biology, you returned to Đakovo. What was your assignment then?

We were sent to the parishes (because the sisters were no longer allowed to work in public schools). I stayed in Đakovo and started teaching catechesis without any preparation or any theological studies. Before every lesson, I had to thoroughly study the catechism. That's how the catechism formed my heart and soul. I found my true vocation there. Nothing could take this vocation away from me. I taught in Đakovo for ten years, but the lessons didn't take place in a school, but in various places, e.g. in the corridor of the convent, in the convent church, in the All Saints' Church or in the tower of the

church, where there was a small room, etc. We had to adjust. There were always lot of children. Some former students still remember our lessons and keep in touch with me even today.

In 1970, you were in Freiburg and worked in the Croatian Catholic Mission. What was your experience there?

I was allowed to work as a catechist in Osijek for eight years. Then I was sent to Freiburg because I knew German. I was already 50 years old and thought, what am I supposed to do in Freiburg now? People were watching me and rumoured 'what is this old sister doing here?'.... I began with five children attending catechesis. When I left, there were more than 80. Recently, a man got in touch who had two small children at the time. On the phone, he told us how he had celebrated his golden wedding anniversary. Former students continue to be in touch.

You have carried out various tasks in your religious life. Can you pick out something special from your rich experience that you particularly remember - pleasant or difficult?

I am convinced that everything, even the difficult things, were arranged by God. When I was in Freiburg, I worked with a

Franciscan friar for 13 1/2 years. We only had catechesis for children on Sundays because that was the only day the parents could bring their children. I had enough time to prepare the lessons, but I could also do something else. God gave me the ability to be creative. German sisters designed various angels before Christmas. I copied this and other things from them and developed them further. People really enjoyed them. In this way, I also brought joy to many of my fellow sisters.

Our Institute has three Blessed Sisters - Mother Maria Theresia Scherer, Sister Ulrika Nisch and Sister Zdenka Schelingova. Which of them are you closest to and which one do you turn most for help?

I like them all, but I am closest to Sr. Ulrika. When I was in Hegne, I visited her grave every day. I also took part in the retreats there. The well-known theologian Karl Rahner led them. Sr. Ulrika is our first Blessed, and I always turned to her in prayer and asked her: 'Ulrika, help me'. And she helped me. I still honour and love her today.

What does it mean to you to be a Holy Cross sister?

I feel that it is purely the vocation and God's great goodness and love for me that I am not worthy of. Yes, that's it - God's great

goodness and love. And to this I hum this Croatian Christmas carol: 'God's great love took the form of a man. For sinners he came down from heaven, for people he was born in a stable.'

Is this the best stage of your life?

Yes, I often say that this present time is the most precious time and the most precious period of my life. What God is giving me now: firstly my fellow sisters, who look after me so well and do their best for me. Then there are the caregivers. They compete to see who amongst them could do a service or give me a surprise. I only have angels around me now. The day and night are short for me to speak incessantly: 'God, I thank you and I praise you! Grant that all people may come to know you and love you, because there is no father as good as you are!' He who loves us so much is so close to us so that we can come to know you and love

you with our heart and soul. The day is too short, the night is too short to give thanks.



Final word by Sister Amadea

It is not easy to summarise the story of such a rich and life of fulfilment. Sr. Emilija has said much more, not only with her words, but with her facial expression, her smile and her blessing. I am convinced that what has been shared here in words can be an impulse for gratitude to God for his love and care that we experience every day on our journey through life.

Sacred Places

125 years of the Convent Church of St. Konrad in Hegne

Sr Josefa M. Harter, Convent Hegne, Province Baden-Württemberg

The Convent Church in Hegne is almost as old as the province. It is a sacred place for the sisters and other worshippers. The following report shows how a church anniversary can be much more than just a retrospective. We are amazed: women in the Gospel, in the history of the Church and of the Convent can be ambassadors of today and address and inspire us anew with text and music.

A meaningful anniversary celebration

On 3 October, our convent community celebrated the 125th anniversary of the consecration of the Convent Church. Together with the construction of the Provincial House, the building of the Convent Church was the first major construction project after the founding of the Baden Province of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in 1895 (which is today the Province Baden-Württemberg).

The convent community celebrated the anniversary with a festive church service. On the same day, the Hegne convent choir and a chamber music ensemble, consisting of sisters and church musician Roland Uhl, organised a



Exterior view

music evening praise. The celebrations not only savoured the past, but also created an atmosphere for the feast of St. Francis the following day.

In the evening praise, three historical female figures had their chance to speak between instrumental music and singing, and their thoughts were then continued in appropriately selected songs:



Choir room

Sr. Konrada Bilger, during whose term of office as the first Provincial Superior of Hegne the construction of the provincial house and the convent church took place, reported on what it was like when there was no convent church and how the first sisters walked 40 minutes every day in wind and weather conditions on foot to neighbouring Allensbach to attend Holy Mass. 'What we won't do for our faith and convictions! With God and for God we can do many things!'

St. Clare told how almost 700 years earlier, Francis of Assisi was also commissioned to build a church, how he initially took this

commission quite literally, but then came to understand ever more deeply that 'building the church' does not end with just constructing it. Following the example of his life, very close to the Gospel in poverty and in service to the people, sisters and brothers live all over the world today and continue to 'build' the Church of Jesus Christ. St. Clare: 'And I hear that you in Hegne are also "building the church" far beyond the church walls. You also look after your fellow human beings, have an open ear and helping hands for people in need and are committed to the preservation of creation with various measures. I think it's great that you have depicted motifs from



Christ as centre

my friend Francis' Canticle of the Sun in the floor mosaics of the chancel after the church renovation and have thus also made your Franciscan attitude visible in the church design.'

Mary Magdalene recalled her closeness to the earthly and risen Jesus and made reference to the Risen Lord in the choir mosaic of the convent church: 'The fact that you, dear sisters, place the Risen Christ, who was the first to reveal himself to me, at the centre of your church architecture shows me the hope in which you are travelling. Although you call yourselves the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross,

you recognise the suffering of Jesus Christ and your fellow human beings to whom you render help. But the cross and the suffering are not the end; the hope of resurrection is at the centre of your faith.' Truly a reason to gratefully intone Te Deum!

The contributions of these three historical figures, specially selected music, thematically appropriate songs and references to the architecture and artistic decoration of the convent church resulted in an exciting interaction. With this exceptional form of evening praise, our church musician Roland Uhl created a deeply impressive experience for the sisters and the numerous guests who attended. He also wrote the lively and informative texts that embedded the anniversary celebration in its historical and spiritual context. He therefore deserves our special thanks!

Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in India: 130 Years of Compassionate Mission

Sr. Josia Cheriantharayil North East Province, Patna, Bihar, India

Just six years after the death of Mother M. Theresia, the first four sisters set off for India. Today, more than 1000 sisters remain dedicated to education, healthcare, social and pastoral services. Let us read the beautiful story of the work of God and the sisters in India!

The early years

In 2024, we the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in India celebrate a profoundly significant milestone: the 130th anniversary of our dedicated and compassionate mission. This journey began when four pioneering sisters arrived in India, 38 years after the congregation's founding in Switzerland under the leadership of Mother Pankratia Wildmer.

Mother Pankratia Wildmer, then Superior General, accepted an invitation from Fr. Cassian Thaler OFM Cap., then Provincial of the Tyrolean Capuchins, to join the missionary apostolate in the Bettiah Prefecture, Bihar, India. On October 29, 1894, Sisters Lamberta Flann, Patrona Bichler, Michelina Scrott, and Chrysogona Thoma enthusiastically embraced this mission. Before departing on November 3, 1894, these sisters

knelt at the foot of the altar in the Mother House Chapel at Ingenbohl, Switzerland, fervently praying, "Here I am Lord, send me."

On November 18, 1894, the sisters landed in Bombay, the Gateway of India, marking the beginning of an enduring legacy. They brought to life the vision of Founders Fr. Theodosius OFM Cap. and Blessed Maria Theresa Scherer. The sisters arrived in Bettiah, Bihar, on November 22, 1894, at 7:00 am, heralding a new chapter in the annals of the Sisters of



Once upon a time...



Pioneers:

Back row: Sr Ludolpha, Sr Theodosia,
Sr Jutta, Sr Ida, Sr Elisa.
Front row: Sr Fausta, Sr Jakoba, Sr Jona,
Sr Melittina, Sr Iphigenia

Mercy of the Holy Cross. They were warmly welcomed by the local community and immediately began their mission, focusing on caring for young orphans, instructing girls in catechism, and teaching practical skills such as sewing, washing, and cooking. The sisters swiftly took over the care of the orphanage, sheltering eighty-four girls, including those who were mentally and physically challenged, blind, and afflicted with sores.

Despite the challenges, the sisters conveyed, “The task that lies before us is a difficult one, but our courage is high. And if it should rain crosses from the sky, with the grace of God, we will persevere.”

Although they initially struggled with the language, they remained hopeful, stating, “...as time goes on we will learn to communicate.”

Their unwavering dedication and commitment sowed the seeds of love and compassion, offering comfort, hope, and encouragement. They taught and trained the girls, cared for orphans, and nursed sick children, providing spiritual guidance and leaving a deep and positive imprint on the lives they touched. Their resilience in overcoming challenges was extraordinary, inspiring everyone who witnessed their heartfelt commitment.

In late July 1896, a cholera epidemic swept through North Bihar, and the sisters became deeply engaged in caring for the affected orphans. Tragically, three



Graves of the first sisters in Bettiah

of the four pioneers succumbed to cholera: Sr. Michelina Scrott on August 3, 1896, and Sr. Lamberta Flann and Sr. Patrona Bichler on August 6, 1896. Sr. Chrysogona Thoma, the lone survivor, displayed remarkable courage despite her grief.

On October 22, 1896, Srs. Ida Epting and Melitina Schmitt arrived in Bettiah, followed by Srs. Fausta Groner, Jacoba Benetz, and Passithea Montalta on November 26, 1896. The heroic deaths of the pioneers motivated many sisters to volunteer for the Indian mission, inspired by the words of the foundress, "Do not lose heart, look up to Him from whom all strength proceeds." Despite life-threatening challenges, the sisters remained steadfast, stating, "We will never forsake the children for whose sake we came from Europe. We will gladly die if it is God's will." Sr. Chrysogona eventually returned to Europe due to ill health in 1903.

The first native sister

The sisters' dedication inspired Francisca Thakur, a young Bettiah girl, to join the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. She became Sister Theodosia Thakur and made her

first profession in 1902. After returning to Bettiah, she continued assisting in the school and with the orphans, teaching her fellow sisters Hindustani and interpreting for them. Sister Theodosia's exemplary life planted a seed that blossomed into the first Indian Novitiate in 1952, welcoming more Indian candidates.

Expanding the activities

The pioneer sisters established their presence in Bettiah and the neighbouring parish of Chuhari, caring for orphans and setting up a convent in Fakirana, Bettiah, in 1899. They entrusted the Chuhari mission to the Sacred Heart Sisters, a native congregation trained by Sr. Lucille Lathion, SCSC.

The missionary efforts of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross were widely appreciated. Within 50 years, the sisters expanded from North Bihar to South Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, responding to the call of the times. In 1952, recruits from various regions of India joined the sisters in spreading compassionate love to the marginalized and

underprivileged across the nation. The spirit of the congregation, guided by the dictums of Founders Fr. Theodosius Florentini OFM Cap. and Mother Maria Theresa Scherer, led to further growth in members and apostolic activities.

From 'Mission area' to province, to provinces

In 1970, India became a Province under the guidance of Sr. M. Sigrid Vogel, Provincial Superior, and Srs. M. Johanna Brandstaetter, Frances Cherian, Laetitia E. Pauvath, and Anne Tete as the Councillors. This expansion continued, leading to the creation of three Provinces in 1991 (Central Province, North-East Province, and South Province), Mid India Province in 2015, and India East Province in 2019. The Indian mission also expanded to Africa in 1993, where it continues to flourish.

A big thank you

Today, the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross remain dedicated to education, healthcare, social and humanitarian services, and pastoral care. With 1080 sisters across five Indian Provinces, our mission extends from Sikkim in the North to Kerala in the South, and from West Bengal in the East to Maharashtra in the West, embracing diverse cultural backgrounds, customs, traditions, and values. This unity in diversity symbolizes the congregation's spirit.

We are grateful to God Almighty for His continuous care and blessings and to our General and Province leadership over the past 130 years for their sensitivity in staying attuned to changing times and needs, equipping the sisters to be proficient and effective in their diverse ministries.

60 Years as Missionary in Taiwan

Sr. M. Christine Lauber, on the occasion of her home leave in Fribourg

Sr. M. Christine looks back and remembers her six decades of service in Taiwan, especially the many challenges she faced at the beginning. Today she is very grateful that she was able to be a 'useful instrument' of God through every challenge.

Reminiscences

60 years ago, on 31 January 1964, we two sisters from Ingenbohl, Sister M. Christine Lauber and Sister Theodosia Allersdorfer from Linz, set off for the so-called missions. The journey by train and ship took six weeks. There were 20 missionaries on the ship. We two sisters travelled to Taiwan, the others to different countries. The church, it seemed, responded to the mission: 'Go out into the whole world and tell everyone that God loves us.'



We arrived in Malän on 16 March. Sister Theresia Studer was the superior and Sister Gertrud Furger taught catechism to a group of young women. The two sisters spoke French, the other sisters spoke German or Chinese. My mother tongue is French. Although I am a former pupil of the Theresianum, I now had to struggle a lot with the German language in order to communicate. I also had to learn Chinese, which I had no idea about. By nature, I like to be on the move, but now I had to deal with climate, nutrition, customs; a completely different world.

At that time, people in the countryside lived in huts with thatched roofs; only the official buildings were made of wood with tiled roofs. These were still the traces of the Japanese, who had ruled the country for 50 years and also demanded their language. But

now it was Chinese. And I in between!

This period of powerlessness initially led me to trust God. I also observed people's customs and habits and the different cultures. This opened my eyes to many things that I would not have realised if I had been in a work situation from the start. A young teacher gave me a lesson in Chinese every day, but it was difficult. When I had mastered a few basic terms, I was sent to the 'clinic' with another nurse. Since I knew how best to use my skills there, I was put to work with a woman who spoke Chinese, Taiwanese and a little Japanese. I have to say, at first it seemed strange to me, because as a nurse I couldn't communicate with the patients. I almost felt like a vet who can't talk to his patients either. But again, I observed closely and with gestures I was able to help myself a little, like with deaf-mutes. God helped me and I was able to help those who needed it.

American soldiers were on the island at this time. They were there to protect the Chinese who had fled from the mainland to Taiwan.

The Americans stayed for about 30 years, but mainly lived with their families in the west of the island. They provided us with flour, powdered milk, oil and medicine, as well as clothes. That was a great help for us. We were able to distribute to those who were in need.

In most cases, the cause of the illnesses was malnutrition and a lack of hygiene. There were no asphalted roads, no electricity in the countryside and no sanitary facilities anywhere. This is what the island in the east looked like 'behind the mountain', because a mountain range runs through the middle of the island, from north to south, more than 3,000 metres high.

In 1964, a terrible typhoon devastated the area of Taitung where we live. Nobody counted the dead and wounded. Most of the houses were destroyed, as were the hanging bridges that the Japanese had built. I remember that some people were glad that the signs of the Japanese occupiers had disappeared. So they resorted to the old system of transporting people across the

water in baskets on a rope.

But that didn't last long. The Americans were not there to rule, but to help. They began to build. Bamboo was replaced by steel structures. Clay was replaced by cement. There were hanging bridges again. The roads were asphalted. More and more people came and went from year to year. One had the impression that the thirst for ever better things was building up, as if the Tower of Babel was being erected. Many people became ill because they ate too much and too well. There were also more and more vaccines because hygiene was improving.

And with all this, where is the

mission? We have everything. You no longer need God. Unfortunately, that's true for many people. So what does a missionary, a sister, do? She tries to make the love of God visible through a simple life, filled with love, totally available and committed to prayer. The grace of God works in hearts if no obstacles are placed in its way.

So I thank God for these 60 years that HE has called me to follow HIM and I ask HIM for forgiveness for my failings and negligence. I have no regrets, because I have lived every day in the love of God and I have tried to be a useful instrument in the hands of Him who loves us.

60 Years of Religious Profession

Sr. Martha Frei, Salvador/BA, Brazil

Like many other sisters, Sr. Martha celebrated her great jubilee of religious profession. With fond memories and gratitude, she looks back at her life before and in the convent.

Loved - called and sent

I cannot reflect on my 60 years of profession without starting with my childhood, because vocation runs like a connecting thread through my whole life.

When I was nine days old and my mother felt that she was close to death, she said to the nurse: 'I give this child to God.' And she went home to God. This thought has often helped and supported me in my life. On the day of the funeral, when the relatives wanted to take our four small children with them, my father said: 'If I have to work day and night, I wouldn't give a child away.'

The years passed on the farm. Shortly before my engagement, I broke off the acquaintance. Although God's call to follow him had become clearer and clearer, I had always suppressed it. One day, the priest who had accompanied me for years said to me: 'Martha, if you don't say yes now, you will lose your vocation.' As a 23-year-old, I discussed with my father that I would like to join a

convent. He replied in tears: 'Martha, I'm not saying go or don't go. But if you decide to go, then stay faithful! I also remained faithful to what I promised in my two marriages.' This thought also kept me going when the little ship of my life rocked heavily.

I stayed in Switzerland for only a few years after my profession, because the superiors knew that I wanted to go on a mission. So the Emmaus Way led me to England. Since our first profession, this gospel has accompanied our



profession group. My stay at the Holy Cross Convent in London lasted more than six years.

Then, in 1973, came the long-awaited day of our mission. The Portuguese language was a hard nut for me to crack, but the perseverance was worth it. The feeling of being sent out remains with me to this day: "Willingness is everything. During my 51 years in Brazil, I was often asked to help in various communities and tasks.

Now I was able to celebrate my diamond jubilee on 16 April 2024. My professed group in Ingenbohl and I at the Casa M. Teresa mission center in Salvador! It was a wonderful experience for me. I prepared for this day for weeks - in prayer and looking back at my life. I looked for photos from the beginning of my life to the jubilee profession. Then I attached the photos to a large wall hanging and prayed with each picture on the retreat day. So this day became a great experience of thanksgiving. When we celebrated the Eucharist at 9 a.m. with two priests and I knelt in front of the altar to renew

my vows, I felt a deep sense of peace in being supported by God and my community.

If I were asked what has sustained me through all these years, I would answer: willingness is everything, the community, prayer, the Eucharist and the sacrament of confession. These are my sources of strength.

What has cost me the most in all these years? The move from Ilha de Maré to Nova Iguaçu (the journey took 32 hours by bus). Furthermore, when I was in the Amazon region and a dear family member died, I was cut off, as it were, without electricity, telephone, internet or post. There I felt the yes to the mission. Later, there was also the uncertainty of whether I would be able to go back to Brazil after my home leave for health reasons.

These experiences allowed me to grow and mature. Now I can only thank God for always holding me up, standing by me and guiding me. He will continue to do so until we all arrive at our destination.

Fifty Glorious Years - Holy Cross Convent School, Kalyan, India

Sr. Jessy Joseph, Holy Cross Convent School, Kalyan, South Province, India

Like our founders, our sisters have always been committed to the education of girls and women. A fitting example of this is the school in Kalyan.

Mission continues

It is with immense joy and gratitude that we the sisters, staff and students extend our greetings to each one of you on the occasion of our school's Golden Jubilee celebration.

The presence of Holy Cross Sisters in Kalyan was its first foothold in Maharashtra, when it positively responded to the invitation by Valerian Cardinal Gracias the Archbishop of Bombay in the year 1968.

On the 10th of June, Sr. Jerome and Sr. Selma, who was then an aspirant, joined Our Lady of

Lourdes School, Kalyan to teach. Fr. Francis Pereira the then Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes church encouraged the sisters to start a school of their own. Feeling the pressing need of focusing on education of girls, they began a separate school for the girls of Kalyan and its vicinity. In view of giving a stable ground for the initiatives, the sisters purchased a property. On 11th February 1974, this initiative took another significant step forward with the laying of the foundation stone for the new school building. The most awaited day dawned on 1st June 1974 when the newly built girl's school was blessed by Rev. Fr. Francis Pereira.



Present campus

He sent 350 girl students from Lourdes school from class I to IV to begin the academic year in the newly established building. Under the experienced leadership of Sr. Matilda Kollampampil, Holy Cross School was opened. In the year 1981, the first batch of students appeared for the board exam from this school. In 1992, the school got a grant in aid based on the free education policy of the government for girls. In 2011, sensing the need of the time, the school was upgraded as a junior college with both science and commerce streams. Later other streams such as arts and computer science were added. At present

around 3600 students are grooming themselves in this distinguished institution. Over the years, 8213 students have passed out of this temple of learning. Today Holy cross convent school, Kalyan is a renowned educational institution known for its commitment to academic excellence and holistic development, nurturing students moral, spiritual, and social values through a well – rounded curriculum, dedicated faculty, co – curricular activities and well-equipped infrastructure facilities. The school is recognized by the Maharashtra state board of education and is a member of the Mumbai Archdiocesan Board of education.



Classical dance



Dance by primary school girls

The school has its rich legacy dating back to its establishment. It emphasizes on moral and ethical values and instills a sense of discipline and focus in life. The campus is equipped with modern facilities, laboratories, libraries, Smart classrooms, spacious auditorium and student friendly environment to support well rounded education to its students. the school actively promotes and encourages the students to participate in co-curricular activities to foster their holistic development and engages them with the local community through



A festive event

various outreach programs and social initiatives.

With the blessings of the Almighty, guided by the spirit and charism of our founders and pioneering sisters the seed sown has sprouted, grown and branched out to be a fruitful tree. Standing firm on the Gospel values and determined to stand the tests of time our institution has been imparting the holistic and dynamic education in order to empower the girl children.

In celebrating Holy Cross School's Golden Jubilee, we honor not just fifty years of academic excellence, but encapsulate a timeless legacy

of nurturing minds, shaping future and instilling core values of mercy and compassion. As we look back the past fifty years, may its vibrant memories serve as a testament to the enduring spirit of unity, love, service, dedication, hard work and learning that continues to illuminate our path forward.

May the legacy of excellence forged over the past fifty years continue to flourish, inspire and empower generations to come. Here's to a future filled with boundless achievements and unwavering dedication. With gratitude and fond memories Holy Cross Convent School celebrates its Golden Jubilee!

25 Years of the ‘Tree of Life Community’ in Hegne Convent

Gabriele Weh-Saile, member of the Tree of Life Community, Hegne

True to Fr. Theodosius Florentini's motto, “The need of the time is the will of God”, some provinces have created a new way of belonging for interested women and men over the past few years, such as Hegne Convent with the ‘Tree of Life’ community.

‘Thanks to the past, and Yes to the future’

(Dag Hammarskjöld)

Under this motto, the convent and the ‘Tree of Life Community’ celebrated the 25th anniversary of the community from 20th to 22nd September 2024 in Hegne Convent. This type of affiliation enables women and men to share in the spirituality of the Holy Cross Sisters.

The anniversary meeting was all about **looking back** and **saying thanks**. On Saturday, all the sisters who laid the foundations for this community and who have shaped, accompanied and supported it from the very beginning were invited to a small celebration. Their moving reports and narratives showed how they recognised the signs of the times

and, full of trust in God's Spirit, made this new form possible. In 1999, the first three women and one man were accepted as members of the Tree of Life Community, which now has 50 members. Special thanks went to Sister Dorothea Maria Oehler, who has led the community for 25 years with great dedication and passion.

The solemn Holy Mass on Sunday in the convent church was also an expression of gratitude. The participation of the Sisters of the General Leadership from the Motherhouse in Ingenbohl and Dr. Peter Kohl, Episcopal Vicar for the Religious Congregations of the Archdiocese of Freiburg, was a special honour for this community.

The sisters and members of the community organised the solemn celebration in fraternal communion, be it through musical



contributions or the various liturgical services. During the service, a woman was accepted as a new member of the Tree of Life community. She used her self-designed candle to illustrate her point: 'My candle depicts the community as a tree with many colorful birds. Each bird is unique, but they all find their home in the tree of life. We may all be different, but we are united by our faith and our longing for a common spiritual home.'

The conclusion of the Holy Mass was characterised by the community's gratitude 'for the fraternal togetherness that we are

able to experience here. It encourages and strengthens us to return to our families and our everyday lives with mindfulness and hope'.

The Holy Mass was followed by a joyful celebration in glorious autumn weather, where the participants were delighted by a rich buffet and good conversation. A big thank you to everyone who contributed in any way to the success of the celebration. We look forward to the future with confidence: **Yes** - trusting that it is a good path and that God will journey with us all.

Visits to the Motherhouse

Sisters from the Province Czech Republic

Sr. Leona Martinková, Province Czech Republic

At the beginning of July, after an interruption, it was again possible to visit the motherhouse as a group. Sisters with 25 years of religious profession from the Province Czech Republic made a tour to the convent hill, Hegne convent and other important places. They remember this special time with gratitude.

Impressions

During our visit we were able to meet sisters from the Generalate, from the provinces Switzerland and Baden-Württemberg as well as missionaries from Brazil and Taiwan. We also got to know Mrs. Therese Malm, who takes care of our sisters in House USA.

The church and the crypt made a special impression on us. Although

the convent complex was mainly made of concrete at the beginning of the 1970s, both the church and the crypt of Mother Maria Theresia have brick walls. The individual bricks are a symbol of our religious community, which we were able to experience here in its entirety. One brick supports the other, one generation builds on the other. If some wanted to stand alone, they would not build a wall or a temple.



As we prayed in the crypt, we saw the pilgrims coming every day and entrusting their joys and sorrows to God through our Blessed Foundress. The love of Mother Maria Theresia is still close to the Swiss people.

While we were here, there was also the open day of the new St. Joseph's Nursing Home for our elderly and sick sisters (and also for lay people). A large number of people took the opportunity to visit the center and it is clear that there is still a great interest in the work of the sisters.

Our group was also able to visit the sisters' home in Fribourg, which has also recently undergone extensive renovation. All rooms are barrier-free, equipped with nursing furniture and have their own sanitary facilities. The house serves elderly and sick sisters not only from our congregation, but also sisters from other orders and congregations. The sisters thus already form a small community of saints here on earth. We were delighted to meet Sister Louise-Henri Kolly, who visited us several times in the Czech Republic during

her term as Superior General.

The pilgrimage to Hegne to visit our Blessed Sister Ulrika was also a spiritual experience. Those of us who were there for the first time were surprised that the convent, together with the school, has its own street with its own bus stop.

Christ without hands hangs on a crucifix in the sisters' chapel. The artist wanted to express that we should see ourselves as the hands of Christ in our time. The sisters in Hegne make a sincere effort to do this in various ways. For example, they have set up a 'Room of Silence' for the students in the school, because today's young people are hardly taught to pray in their families and do not know the value of silence.

God does not ask us to save the whole world, but he wants us to 'do what lies in our power day by day', as Mother Maria Theresia urges us. With this mission, we returned home on Tuesday, 9 July 2024, especially being grateful to Sr. Rahela Lacković and Sr. Mirjam Jerković, who looked after us with such great care.

Sisters from Five Indian Provinces

Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril, Generalate, Ingenbohl

In 2024, eighty sisters from five Indian provinces fulfilled a long-cherished dream by visiting the Mother House. This pilgrimage was a journey of faith and a profound spiritual experience for the Indian sisters and those residing on the Hill of Ingenbohl and Hegne. It was an opportunity to connect deeply with the Holy Places in and around the Mother House, and to walk in the footsteps of our spiritual ancestors.

Treasuring the memories

In 2024, a long-cherished dream came true for 80 sisters from five Indian provinces: a visit to the motherhouse. This journey became a pilgrimage of faith and a deep spiritual experience. It was an opportunity to get to know the sacred places on the hill and in the surrounding area and to follow in the footsteps of our founders. A visit to Hegne was significant, where the sisters had the opportunity to pray before the relics of Blessed Sister Ulrika, a model of simplicity and holiness. The pilgrimage also included visits to Rome and Assisi, where they experienced the historical and spiritual richness of these sacred places.

In Switzerland, the journey continued with a visit to the Einsiedeln Church, where Mother Maria Theresia discerned her vocation before entering the convent. They also traveled to



Sisters from Mid India province



Sisters from India North East Province



Sisters from India East and India South provinces

Lucerne, where she had worked in a hospital. Another key destination was Meggen, the birthplace of Mother Maria Theresia, where she spent sixteen years of her life. Here, the sisters visited the house where she spent her eight years with her uncle and the church where Mother Theresia was baptized. These visits were profoundly moving, as they felt the loving presence of Mother Maria Theresia accompanying them like a mother with her daughters.

The sisters embraced the scenic beauty of each place they visited, treasuring the memories in their hearts. Their journey included visits to Theresianum school and the new nursing home in Ingenbohl, as well as the Mariannum school in Hegne. They also visited the churches in both Hegne and the Mother House, gaining new perspectives and spiritual insights. A presentation on the history of the Congregation, combined with time spent in prayer at the Crypta and Perpetual Adoration Chapel, renewed their spiritual strength. The three miraculous crosses associated with Mother Maria Theresia imparted courage and strength, inspiring them to continue faithfully following the path of compassionate love and the vision of our founders, in the footsteps of



Sisters from India South province



Sisters from India Central province

the crucified Jesus.

This pilgrimage was not only a journey across geographical boundaries but also an inner journey of transformation and renewal, reaffirming their vocation to live out the Holy Cross charism with zeal and dedication. They returned home with renewed determination and zest for life.

From our Provinces and Vicariates

Ingenbohl, Province Switzerland

On the feast of St. Theresa of Lisieux, patron saint of the missions, Sister Tobia Rüttimann, Provincial Superior, officially welcomed eleven missionaries of the Holy Family during the Mass to Ingenbohl Convent. Eight priests moved into the St. Josef Nursing Home in September 2024, while three found new accommodation in the guest house for priests.

About two years ago, Father Julius Zihlmann contacted Sr. Tobia and expressed it in the following impressive words: 'The missionaries of the Holy Family are looking for an accommodation'. After several conversations and mutual visits over the past two years, this search ultimately resulted in a final decision.

Sr. Tobia emphasised: 'Dear Missionaries of the Holy Family, we hope that with time you will be able to say: "Yes, we have found an accommodation in Ingenbohl and we feel at home here". From my side, I can simply say: It's great

that you are here and I am convinced that our common path into the future will be an enrichment for both sides. I wish you a lot of strength for the time ahead.'

At the end of the Holy Mass, Fr. Julius Zihlmann, the Superior of the community, expressed his thanks for the warm welcome of his community to Ingenbohl.

As a community, we are happy about the encounters in everyday life and the strengthening of our praying and singing during the liturgies.

Information from the General Leadership

Firstly, we apologise to the Sisters of the Croatian Province for two errors in the last edition: The names: Sr. Dubravka Medak among the newly appointed and Sr. M. Lucija Kopic among the outgoing councillors did not appear. We are very sorry for that. We therefore repeat the announcement.

Appointments

Appointment of the Provincial Leadership Croatia on 10 May 2024

The General Leadership has appointed the Provincial Leadership of the Province Croatia for a term of three years.

Provincial Superior (1st term)
Sr. Marija Brizar

Councillors:

Sr. Nikolina Nikolić
Sr. Dragica Ivkić
Sr. Doroteja Krešić
Sr. Dubravka Medak

Start of office: 14 September, 2024

We sincerely thank the newly appointed and reappointed Sisters of the Provincial Leadership for the Province Croatia for their

willingness to take on this challenging task. We wish them strength, courage and confidence for the task they have taken on, as well as God's abundant blessing.

We also sincerely thank Sr. Valerija Široki, the outgoing Provincial Superior, the Provincial Councillors, Sr. M. Lucija Kopic, Sr. M. Emanuela Kvesić and Sr. Ivanka Marija Vrgoč for their dedicated service for the welfare of their fellow sisters and the province and wish them all the best and God's rich blessing for their future mission.

Contribution to working together: Province Slovakia

Sr. M. Sofia Kéderová from the Province Slovakia has been part of the international Generalate community since 19 September 2024. As a nurse with a good knowledge of German, she works in the St. Anna community of the Province Switzerland. She will also work partly in the archives of the Generalate. We would like to thank the Province Slovakia and wish Sr. M. Sofia God's blessing for her new mission.

A testimony of the mission in Lampedusa, in Ingenbohl

Sr. Rufina Pinto, Province India South, who is working for the migrants in Lampedusa, was on holiday in the Motherhouse, Ingenbohl, from 15th to 30th September 2024. During her stay, she presented some facts about her work for the migrants in two interviews in our convent church and in the parish church in Ingenbohl. This touched the hearts of the sisters and the faithful in the parish. We wish Sr. Danila Antunović from the province Croatia and Sr. Rufina God's blessing for their mission in Lampedusa.

Appointment of the Provincial Leadership India Central on 26th September 2024

The General Leadership has appointed the Provincial Leadership of the Province India Central for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior (2nd term)
Sister Veena Akkal,

Assistant
Sr. Usha Kiran Toppo

Councillors
Sr. Celina Sangita Beck
Sr. Alma Gulab Bara
Sr. Kamla Panna
Sr. Bincy Joseph

Start of office: 8 December, 2024

Appointment of the Provincial Leadership Mid India on 11th

October 2024

The General Leadership has appointed the Provincial Leadership of the Province Mid India for a term of three years:

Provincial Superior (1st term)
Sr. Diana Chettoor

Assistant
Sr. Arpana Barwa

Councillors
Sr. Veronica Choranth
Sr. Clerita D'Mello
Sr. Cresen Toppo
Sr. Jessy Thekkan

Start of office: 8 December, 2024

Human Trafficking Steering Committee

From 25 September to 2 October 2024, Sr. Anna Affolter, Sr. Dhanam Mary and Sr. Gabriella Légrádi, the members of the Steering Committee against Human Trafficking, met at the Sant' Agnese House in Locarno, Ticino, where a community of the Switzerland Province lives. The general leadership was invited to spend a day there to be informed about the work done so far.

UISG Meeting in Würzburg

Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönenberger, who is a member of the board for the German-speaking countries of Europe of the UISG, took part in the constellation meeting in Würzburg from 21 to 25 October 2024. (UISG = International Union of Superiors General)

General Visitation in the Province India North East, October 2024

The visitation in the Province India North East will take place from 30 October to 10 December 2024. Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönenberger, Sr. Gabriele Schachinger, Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril, Sr. Pratima Minj and Sr. Roseline Kujur will conduct the visitation.

House USA, Province Slovakia, Province Czech Republic

Sr. Dorothee Halbach was in Merrill USA from 21 October to 18 November 2024 for various upcoming tasks.

Sr. Rahela Lacković will be in the Province Slovakia from 19 to 25 November 2024 and in the Province Czech Republic from 26 November to 2 December 2024.

Visitations 2025

The same theme applies as in the year 2024: 'Moved by God's spirit, sustained by his infinite love, we shape the future together'.

General visitation in the province Slovakia

The visitation in the Province of Slovakia will take place from 27 January to 23 February 2025. Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönenberger, Sr. Gabriele Schachinger, Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril and Sr. Rahela Lacković will conduct the visitation. Sr. Dorothee Halbach, Sr. Pratima Minj and Sr. Roseline Kujur will also take part in the meetings at the end of the visitation on 20 February 2025.

General visitation in the Province Europa Mitte

From 17 March to 16 April 2025, the visitation will take place in the Province Europa Mitte. The entire General Leadership will take part in the visitation.

Province Italy

Sr. Marie-Marthe Schönenberger will be in the Provincial House Besozzo from 3rd to 7th March 2025 for various tasks in her responsibility for the Province Italy.

Quarterly
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