

HE LEADS I FOLLOW

Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration • Immaculate Heart of Mary Province

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Burning With the Love of the Cross

During our recent pilgrimage to Germany, where we witnessed the Beatification of our beloved Mother Foundress, Blessed Maria Theresia Bonzel, several of the Sisters partook in the opportunity to walk the path Mother took to pray the Way of the Cross. She had an extraordinary devotion to this Franciscan prayer, illustrated in this passage from her biography by Father Lothar Hardick, OFM:

Thus she began the year 1895 in a state of illness. In the words of her letter of January 19, she had reference to her own illness: ". . . there always remains something to wish for, and since the beloved cross may not be wanting in our following of Jesus, the way of the cross is always the best way" (III 6). In love of her crucified Lord, she often prayerfully made the Way of the Cross, which the parish had erected on the Mount of the Cross on the opposite bank of the Bigge River. She arose early and rejoiced greatly when one or another Sister accompanied her. She always returned in time for the opening of the conventual morning exercises and prayers in the Chapel. Above all she loved to make this Way of the Cross barefoot and humbly. During intervals when her health was better, she must have walked very briskly for the distance from the convent to the first station required almost thirty minutes. When more or less overcome by ill health, her steps became slower. The Sisters who accompanied her jokingly remarked that they were glad the Mother was not so well, for they could then keep pace with her, especially while making the Way of the Cross.



WINTER 2014

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE

FEATURE

*Wisdom and Witness
of our Senior Sisters*

SOURCE AND SUMMIT

*Blessed Maria Theresia's
Eucharistic Spirituality*

IN-FORMATION

*A Beautiful Refrain:
Sister M. Cecelia Clare
Reflects*

From the Desk of the Provincial

Dear Friends,

We have just celebrated the solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of Mary, on March 19th. This is a very special feast in our Community because Mother Maria Theresia had such confidence in his intercession and for good reason. We read in her biography that she turned to St. Joseph for the spiritual and material needs of the Community and on many occasions received miraculous results, often receiving the exact monetary amount needed for a special building project. When visiting the individual convents she would take note of whether or not the Sisters were honoring St. Joseph properly. On one occasion the Sisters were in need of food and she discovered their statue was upstairs in the attic covered with dust. She asked that it be brought down so that the Sisters might more easily plead for his intercession. That same evening a farmer arrived with a wagon load of food for the Sisters. In return for the many prayers answered through the intercession of St. Joseph, Mother Maria Theresia promised that each of her Sisters would receive the name “.....of St. Joseph” as part of the name they were given at the time of their investiture. This tradition continues to this day. Even more than the material favors requested, Blessed Maria Theresia prayed that her Sisters would become imbued with the virtues of St. Joseph. She often prayed,

“To you, O Blessed Joseph, shield us ever under your patronage, that, following your example and strengthened by your help, we may live a holy life, die a happy death, and attain to everlasting joy in heaven. Amen.”

Following the example of Blessed Maria Theresia may each of us rely on the intercession of good St. Joseph and imitate his life of humility and deep faith and trust in Divine Providence.

May God bless you,

Sister M. Angela



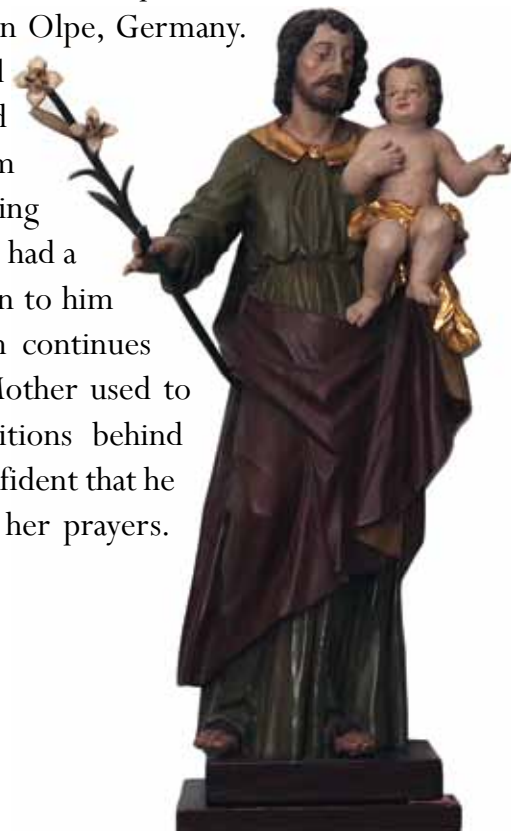
Now venerate good Saint Joseph; he can and will help you in all your needs.

Letter III-9a

DID YOU KNOW . . .

This is a picture of Mother Maria Theresia's favorite statue of St. Joseph. It is located at the Motherhouse in Olpe, Germany.

Mother loved St. Joseph and prayed to him often, insuring that her Sisters had a strong devotion to him as well, which continues to this day. Mother used to place her petitions behind this statue, confident that he would answer her prayers. He always did.





A Beautiful Refrain: Sister Cecelia Clare Reflects

There is a beautiful refrain common to many lives in discernment: hearing God's call during the hours spent in His presence in Eucharistic adoration. Early in 2004, I began taking a weekly holy hour at my parish in St. Paul, Minnesota. I looked forward to this hour of prayer. This time with Jesus would eventually open my heart to the religious life.

Growing up in rural Minnesota just outside the Twin Cities, I had no contact with women religious. My whole family was involved in parish life, and I especially enjoyed serving in music ministry as a flutist and singer. After graduating high school, I attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN and received my B.A. in music.

After college, I worked in various secretarial jobs, sang in my parish choir, also working as a cantor and soloist on occasion. One Sunday after Mass, I donated to the Little Sister of the Poor who was soliciting funds at the parish. Without missing a beat, she handed



Sister Cecelia Clare Stoffel celebrates her first profession of vows with Sister Marita Stoffel. Although they are not blood relatives, they share all things in common, including a name!

me a brochure and asked if I had ever considered a religious vocation. I politely took that brochure, and it probably took another two years before I would acknowledge the possibility of a call to the religious life.

Sometime later, while looking through a booklet of women's religious communities, I recognized one of the sisters of our community from a vocation event I had attended. This was providential, as I felt a definite connection with Franciscan spirituality. I decided to visit our sisters and one other community.

After a couple of visits, I realized that I had a great sense of peace. I entered our community in September 2008. Currently I am in my third year of temporary vows. I am blessed to work as a patient advocate at our hospitals. Through all this, I am most grateful to God for the blessing of my vocation, and to my family and friends for their prayers, encouragement and support.

Young Ladies Enjoy a Winter Discernment Retreat



Twenty-eight young women joined the Sisters in late February for a discernment retreat led by Father Bob Lengerich, pastor of Saint Dominic Parish in Bremen, Indiana. In addition to spiritual conferences, confession, and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the young women spent joyful moments of recreation with the Sisters.

The Wisdom and Wit

Blessed Maria Theresia Bonzel, foundress of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, once remarked: “An obedient soul knows that at every moment, she carries out the will of God.” One hundred fifty years later, Blessed Maria Theresia’s dedication to the will of God is daily renewed and relived at Our Lady of the Angels Convent in Mishawaka. Our Lady of the Angels Convent, affectionately but truthfully nicknamed “The Powerhouse of Prayer,” is the convent where the retired Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration live in joy, love, and hope by focusing on their favorite and primary occupation: adoration of God.

Sister M. Marita Stoffel and Sister M. Alfreda Bracht are vibrant examples of sisters who are dedicated to prayer and have sought to fulfill the will of God throughout their lives, especially through the apostolates of education and health care.

Sister Marita, who attended Saint Peter and Paul Parish in Huntington, Indiana, became a sister on June 29th, 1932. Only five years later, she obediently began her dedication to the apostolate of education by becoming a primary teacher at St. Ann’s School in Lafayette, Indiana. Sister Marita spent nearly 70 years teaching students of diverse backgrounds and social statuses from the primary grades to the collegiate level and also received a PhD from Purdue University. Sister Marita specialized in Reading and spent 40 years as an educator in the inner city, helping special needs students of all ages improve their reading skills.

Sister Marita is a true daughter of St. Francis in her love for the poor. Teaching was her way of giving the disadvantaged “something they don’t have.” Although her specialization in Reading naturally focused on preparing her students for a well-rounded life on earth, Sister Marita did not hesitate to stress the significance of preparing for life in the world to come. “[The students] need to think about the future and death. Don’t hesitate to think about that... You need to get them on the right path and help them stay there.”

After 82 years in the convent, she is our oldest Sister “in convent age.” Sister Marita maintains her positive outlook and

Sister M. Marita Stoffel, O.S.F.



ness of our Senior Sisters

has never retired from having a keen interest in those around her, offering words of encouragement and determination.

Sister Alfreda, the oldest sister in the community by chronological age, spent many years ministering to others in the field of healthcare. Despite her initial request to be trained as a nurse, Sister Alfreda first began working in the medical records office and eventually became involved in hospital administration. She especially remembers her service at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, Illinois where she was stationed for 28 years. While Sister Alfreda was the administrator at St. Francis, the hospital performed its first open heart and facial reconstruction surgeries, which were considered cutting-edge procedures at the time.

It may come as a surprise that this hardworking sister who spent 62 years in the hustle and bustle of healthcare entered religious life in order to spend more time in prayer. Originally from the German St. Boniface parish in West Point, Nebraska, Sister Alfreda recalls that she “wanted to pray more.” Despite her busy schedule, Sister Alfreda proudly points out that she was always in chapel for the appointed times of prayer. Even today, the one-hundred-two year old Sister takes an hour of adoration, six days a week. “I just talk to God,” Sister Alfreda shrugs. “Don’t you?”

Indeed, Sister Alfreda and Sister Marita have both made their lives “a single act of adoration and praise of God.” They have totally and freely given themselves to God through their work in the apostolate and in their quiet life of prayer. Having followed their Divine Bridegroom who “leads and guides every human heart,” both Sisters wish to continue “in eternity... what already here was the favorite occupation” of their hearts: “the adoration of God.” Thank you, Sisters, for your witness, wisdom, and prayer. You are a constant encouragement to us who are still learning to seek the will of God.



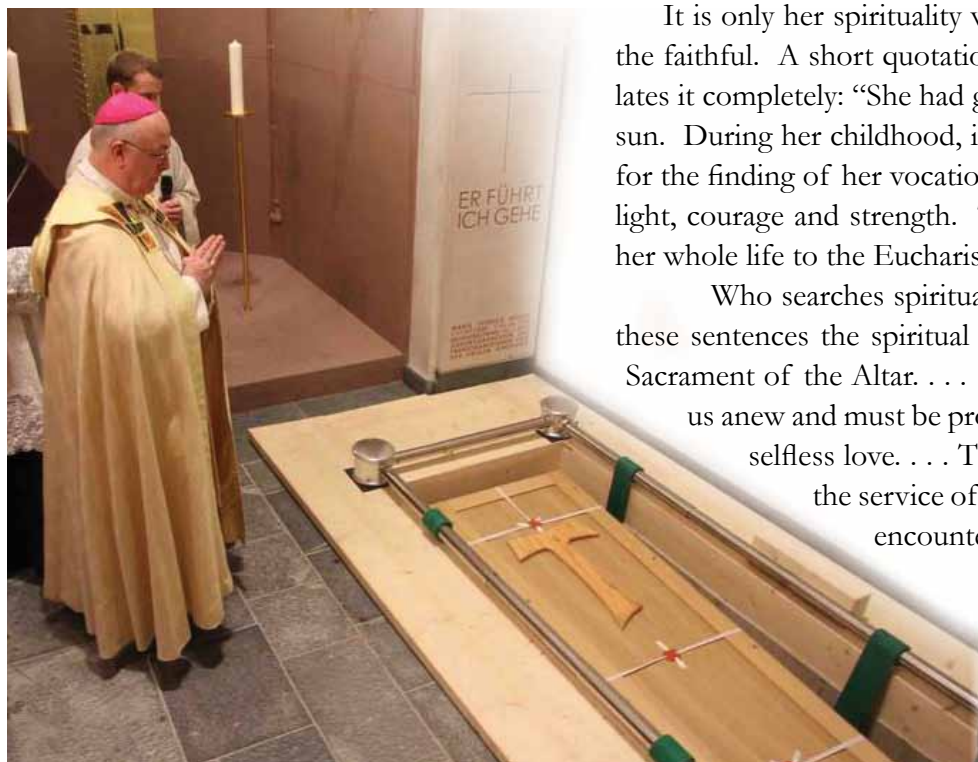
Sister M. Alfreda Bracht



Source and Summit

*Combining the Contemplative Life with the Active
in Perpetual Adoration and Works of Mercy*

Blessed Maria Theresa's Eucharistic Spirituality



It is only her spirituality which makes this woman understandable for the faithful. A short quotation from the files of the Beatification formulates it completely: "She had grown under the soft light of the Eucharistic sun. During her childhood, in the boarding school Koln, in the struggles for the finding of her vocation she always went to the hidden God to find light, courage and strength. That was how the longing came to dedicate her whole life to the Eucharistic Adoration. . . .

Who searches spiritual community with our new Blessed, finds in these sentences the spiritual key: her love of humanity grew out of the Sacrament of the Altar. . . . The Eucharistic Lord must be discovered by us anew and must be proclaimed as the opportunity to make possible selfless love. . . . That is why Blessed Maria Theresa grounded the service of her Sisters from the beginning in the praying encounter with Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar.

*An Excerpt from the Homily of Josef
Cardinal Cordes at the transfer of the body
of Blessed Maria Theresa Bonzel*

Cardinal Cordes Venerates the new tomb of Blessed Maria Theresa Bonzel.



Exposition at Sunrise

Lord, I gaze on you, Bread of Life,
Circled by the morning sun.
Heavenly hosts worship you unceasingly.
I join them as one!

Lord, I gaze on you, Bread of Life,
Circled by the morning sun.
Heavenly hosts worship you unceasingly.
I join them as one!

Your radiant love fills my soul,
Drawing me closer to you.
By your grace --
I am made whole in your image;
One is made from two.

Sister M. Elise Kriss

Sr. M. Elise Kriss entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in 1966. She has faithfully served in the educational apostolate of our Community for more than forty years and currently serves as the President of the University of Saint Francis where she has lovingly served for thirty years.

Our Life *in Pictures*



Sister M. Lissetta's seventh-grade students wrote and performed a play about Blessed Maria Theresia Bonzel.



Sister M. Anita shares with Franciscan Alliance employees about the Franciscan Tradition during a day of recollection.



During the snowy days of winter Sister Lucia and Sister Mary Grace kept occupied with "cool" projects.



In January Sister Mary Vianney was honored with the Light of Learning award, recognizing her positive impact on Catholic education.



Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration

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Return Service Requested

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, participate in the mission of the Roman Catholic Church by living the Gospel after the example of Saint Francis and our foundress, Mother Maria Theresia Bonzel. We strive to combine the contemplative life with the active through perpetual adoration and the works of mercy in education, healthcare, and other ecclesial ministries.



Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration

YOUNG ADULT WOMEN
AGES 18-35
CALL TO SCHEDULE A VISIT