

## A spotlight throughout the year

Rorate masses during Advent and, in a special way, the hour of adoration by candlelight on the fourth Sunday of Advent showed us that there is always hope in the darkness.

This was the experience throughout the year. There were events and days full of lights in our everyday lives.

It began in the New Year with the retreat with H.H. P. Basilius Sandner OSB from Maria Laach Abbey.

We had Bible sharing on Tuesdays, rosary on Wednesdays and Eucharistic Adoration on Thursdays before Vespers with Holy Mass at 5.30 pm. Prayer for peace, for spiritual vocations and for a good new archbishop were always on the agenda. Musical hours of adoration took place once a month, weekly May devotions in May and solemn rosary devotions in October.

Our everyday life has become more difficult to manage due to the age of some of our sisters and the smaller community. We are very grateful that Sr. Ma. Assumpta Banaag OSB (nursing, wash house, refectory, house cleaning) and Sr. M. Emeline Casulla OSB (kitchen and cantor) from our community in Cogon in the Philippines support us so generously.

On March 23, our beloved Sr. Nieves Villareal went home to her heavenly Father. This sentence really has to be written like this:

### Beloved

- Many, many people, especially children and young people loved and appreciated her very much! She was like an "icon" of Kirchsletten. We miss her very much!

### Home

- She wanted to go home; she often emphasized that. Life, meaning her various illnesses and restrictions were difficult for her to accept and bear. She loved working and stood up for us and her "customers", be it the piglets earlier or the vegetables later. Work was her worship. "All for the Lord!"

### Heavenly Father

- That was also their faith. The Heavenly Father cares for her and us! Now her longing is fulfilled. May she be our intercessor with the heavenly Father.

We didn't think when she had to go to the Bamberg hospital in the late afternoon that she would go home shortly before midnight. May she rest in His peace.

We would like to say "Vergelt's Gott!" to Dr. Ott for his devoted and understanding care for her and for all of us; as well as Dr. Braun and her medical team. Physiotherapists in Zapfendorf and Bad Staffelstein, Mediteam in Bamberg and Mrs. Groh made life much easier for the sisters with age-related and illness-related complaints.

Thank you!

We were unable to celebrate the jubilees, which we announced in our last letter, individually and in a big way.

To open the anniversary celebrations, a top-class ensemble led by Michael Oman, one of the leading flutists of our time and the solo flutists of the Vienna Philharmonic, Walter Auer with Julia Auer (transverse flute), Karlheinz Busch (violoncello) and our Sr. M. Felizitas Kaneko OSB (spinet/organ) a benefit concert "In the glamour of the Baroque" on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023. We thank the artists from the bottom of our hearts and are already looking forward to their next concert.

We are proud of our sister that she plays along with such artists as a matter of course and with great joy. She is also the one who, despite her chronic illnesses, is committed to our liturgy, especially playing the organ.

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023, the birthday of our foundress Mother Edeltraud Danner OSB, we celebrated various jubilees this year: 50 years of rise to an abbey, 60 years of profession of Sr. Humilitas Presbitero OSB and 50 years of profession of Sr. M. Francis Milo OSB, as well as 70 years of transfer of the Niederaltaich monastery property to our community.

Our Reverend Diocesan Administrator and Auxiliary Bishop Herwig Gössl attended the festive service. Our two sisters renewed their profession and we thanked God together with many guests.

A special and long-awaited light is Laura Fabian, who came to us from Leipzig last year. She was accepted into the postulate on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023. Interested and ready for service in many areas of work she has become a valuable and hopeful member of our community. We pray for her and that more young women will be attracted to our community by her example.

On Corpus Christi Day, we picked up Sr M. Eunice Escalicas OSB from our active community in the Philippines at the airport in Munich. Two weeks later she was re-dressed, it means she received our habit because she wanted to join our community. The joy was great, as was the disappointment when she had to recognize that it was not her path after all.

On 17<sup>th</sup> June, after a long break because of Corona, Sr. Barbara Friese from Duisburg, Sr. Raphaela Hümmer from Bamberg and Br. Johannes Schmalzgruber from Bad Staffelstein took their oblation. Rudolf Schramm was accepted into the probationary period. The joy and gratitude were great. Since then, another interested woman has already contacted us.

Twice we celebrated with new priests their First Mass - Our church was overcrowded every time, people were still standing in the entrance area.

We had many guests, from near and far, young and old. A few times our guest houses were overcrowded: A group of 45 pilgrims from Stettin, twice more than 45 secondary school students from the Heilig-Kreuz-Realschule in Donauwörth. The last came as pilgrims of Santiago, that was a great pleasure for us: It is great when teachers take on something like this and realize it. High school students from Plauen and Forchheim came for the same reason.

It is also important to name the various Bioland events such as advisor meetings, intensive course for young people and seminars.

Mrs. Christine Helmrich was able to hold numerous and very well-attended offerings in the herb garden.

Sr. Bernadette, our postulant Laura and Sr. Eunice were at the novitiate meeting in Niederaltaich, a very beautiful and profound experience.

We celebrated Mother Mechthild's 65th birthday on 21<sup>st</sup> May with many guests from 2:00 pm: Her 93-year-old father was probably the oldest of the well-wishers, siblings and their children and grandchildren, Oblates, benefactors, employees, volunteers, friends, course colleagues, the principal of the school in Zapfendorf, our district administrator Mr. Johann Kalb and many Filipina women...

The highlight was the May devotion with the group "Communis cantare" and the other musicians, who have been faithfully and selflessly helping to organize the hours of adoration for decades. The May devotion was a musical delight, as the women's choir of the Franconian Singers' Choir was also present.

On 5<sup>th</sup> October our long-time head of the kitchen, Sr. Hedwig Domondon OSB, celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. In addition to many Filipina women and their families, Oblate, employees, volunteers and friends came to congratulate her. Our mayor, Mr. Michael Senger, congratulated on behalf of our district administrator.

And once again he came: On 11<sup>th</sup> November for the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sr. Humilitas Presbitero OSB, as it is written in her identity card. We celebrated, as we had done many years before on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

Why this?

She was really born on 5<sup>th</sup> November. As she was so small and weak everyone thought that she would not survive. When she was a little more viable on 11<sup>th</sup> November the birth of a baby daughter named "Lourdes" was reported. She still can't believe that she is already so old. She tells us this often, even when she leaves the church.

She invited our Reverend Auxiliary Bishop Herwig Gössl to her birthday party. He came with great pleasure to drink coffee and sing together.

Mother Mechthild was at the Federation meeting in Frauenchiemsee from 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> October and before that twice in St. Bonifaz, Munich, where the abbesses of the Bavarian Benedictine Federation met for consultations.

A loyal helper for many years, "Jacky" from Sommerach, returned to us after his winter break. Unfortunately, his health took a toll on him and he had to stop working for ever a short time later. We miss him very much, as he usually knew who had come into the yard and where certain things were kept. So now Mr. Thomas Kern has no less to do, even though we have given up selling vegetables in the store because of profitability. A new helper joined us Reinhard Meyer.

Our farm manager in agriculture, Mr. Andreas Schwab, together with Mr. Simon Wiblishauser (both Bioland advisors), in addition to specializing in vegetable cultivation and the cultivation of cereals and seed propagation launched a new eco-project - a recording system for special organic crops.

Over the course of the summer, the former "Ohlmüller"-barn was cleared out, rubbish removed, silos dismantled, the floor concreted and drains installed so that there would be no more flooding when it rains.

A lot of work - thank you very much!

It was subsidized by the Öko-Modellregion Obermain-Jura, which we are very pleased and grateful about.

We would like to thank our employees who work faithfully in the kitchen, farm and wax factory and who are always ready to help out in other ways.

Our numerous volunteers are also indispensable: Sr. Carola, Heide and Sr. Barbara in the guest house; Kurt in the garden and with repairs of all kinds; Franz with his tireless electrical work; Herbert, who laid new floors, insulated doors and painted walls.

A very special gift came from the company "Maler Klee": the senior boss provided us with his labor free of charge and gave our refectory and the newly furnished office of Sr. Bernadette a new look.

Christmas donations enabled us to pay for most of the new lighting.

Roswitha, who came almost every weekend, Patricia, Ingrid, Elisabeth (Mother Mechthild's course mates), Sr. Raphaela and Mrs. Wolf at the monastery gate were also indispensable helpers.

Former employees like Anneliese and Erika were happy to help out when things got tight. Sr. Maria Antonia and Sieglinde helped with making the communion candles, Elke cleaned the windows of the guest houses, Uschi and Gertrud also helped. A whole group of local women took care of the herb garden. We have a lot to do, and without our volunteers we would not be able to manage the normal daily routine.

We would like to say a very warm "Vergelt' s Gott" to all of them and would be delighted if they support us in every way for a long time and if others join us. If helpers have been forgotten in this list, our gratitude goes out to them in the same way. God forgets no one.

The President of the Bavarian Benedictine Federation Mother Abbess Hildegard Dubneck OSB from Eichstätt and Prof. P. Noah Heckel OSB from the Benedictine Abbey of Münsterschwarzach were commissioned by our Reverend Diocesan Administrator Auxiliary Bishop Herwig Gössl for the canonical visitation. They came on 23<sup>rd</sup> September and held a visitation on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> September. We thank them both for their patience and for their words of encouragement and appreciation. May the suggestions bear fruit in the coming period.

On 20<sup>th</sup> October, the 12-year term of office of Mother Mechthild Thürmer OSB came to an end, so our Reverend Diocesan Administrator and Auxiliary Bishop Herwig Gössl and Sr. Claudia Hink OFM from the Franciscan Sisters in Vierzehnheiligen came to the abbess election. Mother Mechthild Thürmer OSB

was reelected for a second term of office. We wish and pray for her fullness of spiritual gifts and that, above all, young women will soon join our community. With "courage and confidence," her new election slogan, she and we want to go into the future, knowing that HE goes with us every step of the way.

We wish and pray for a merry Christmas, God's protection and blessing, and good health,

Mother Mechthild Thürmer OSB and convent