

“LIVING BENEDICTINE VALUES”

Short Biographies of fourteen Missionary Benedictine Sisters

by Sister Matilda Handl, OSB

Rome/Olinda 1997

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INTRODUCTION

During the month of July 1997, 25 Missionary Benedictine prioress and sisters serving in posts of authority are gathered in Brazil. We are reflecting on Benedictine Values and Inculturation, applying what we heard and learned to the 20 countries into which God has placed our congregation.

It gives me pleasure to present this collection (seven times two) of brief biographies of some of our sisters, who in the 112 years, from our beginning until our own days, have faithfully lived the monastic and missionary values of our charism as Missionary Benedictine Sisters.

Our thanks go to Olinda Priory for making it possible to present this little book to the participants of the Meeting of Prioress 1997. It will make more of our rich Missionary Benedictine Heritage known to our young members in formation everywhere. May the lives of our foremothers inspire us in all our communities to seek and to serve God, single-heartedly as they did, in loving missionary service!

Sorocaba, on the Solemnity of St. Benedict, July 11, 1997

M.M. Irene Dabalus, OSB - Prioress General

PREFACE

This small selection of biographical sketches originated from a syllabus and resources presented to our formators in 1991 for teaching our Missionary Benedictine history. Mother Edeltrud Weist suggested I put more stories of our sisters in booklet form. The collections has been revised and expanded. At long last it is ready to be shared.

My thanks go to Mother Edeltrud for her encouragement and to the sisters in our priories who provided information, photographs, and their valuable comments. Thanks also to the members of the present Generalate and staff, to our congregation archivist, Sister Bernita Walter, who reviewed and corrected the content, and to Sister Cherubina Krombacher for the proof-reading. Sisters in our Olinda Priory gave practical assistance in producing the booklet. To all these dear Sisters, a heartfelt thank you and God bless you!

The lives of these 14 sisters were selected from among many more who could have been told. Sister Bernita has several lists of Missionary Benedictines who lived our charism in exemplary fidelity and whom our rising generation would enjoy knowing.

I chose sister about whom, to my knowledge, there is as yet no published account. They are sisters from our different priories who exemplified our Missionary Benedictine values. Shadow sides of their character and erroneous choices were not omitted, as they are a part of our reality, revealing God's loving mercy and providence in our human history.

May my little labor of love bring joy and courage to the readers, especially to our future sisters receiving Missionary Benedictine formation in the many lands of our worlds. Like St. Benedict and our foremothers, let us prefer nothing whatsoever to the love of Christ!

Rome/Sorocaba, Brazil, July 11, 1997

Sr. Matilda Handl, OSB

Sister Bernardine Hefele, OSB (1870-1957)

Minister of the Exterior

St. Ottilien / Tutzing, Dar es Salaam, Manila, Peramiho / Ndanda

Josephine Hefele experienced a lot of history in her 87 years of life. She was born on January 4, 1870 at Bronnen in southern Germany. She grew up healthy and strong amid her many sisters and brothers in a family of deep faith. Two of her sisters entered the convent at Menzingen.

Josephine was discerning her own vocation in 1889. Just then German newspapers carried reports about the Benedictine missions in East Africa. Josephine eagerly read the accounts about the destruction of the Pugu Mission on January 13, 1889. One sister and two brothers lost their lives there. Another sister and three brothers were taken captive. Josephine read about the motherhouse at St. Ottilien. The risks of a missionary's life did not deter her. Rather, she was inspired to become a Missionary Benedictine Sister. (So were our future Mother Birgitta Korff and Sister Thekla Munninghoff, Constantia Mayr, Elisabeth Mösl and Marcella Epping; they all served in Africa.)

Josephine Hefele entered St. Ottilien in 1890. On January 6, 1894, she pronounced her vows as Sister Bernardine. Already on June 1 of the same year she was sent to the mission in East Africa. At first Sister Bernardine served at St. Maria Convent in Dar es Salaam, where the sisters had begun missionary work in 1890.

In August of 1895 Sisters Birgitta Korff, Bernardine Hefele, Klara Essmann and Afra Gillot set out for the new mission of Lukuledi, far to the south of Dar es Salaam. This safari required five days of strenuous eight-hour marching. Once the palm groves of the coast had been left behind, the travelers trudged up and down rocky, thorny paths to the interior. They lived on meager rations, throats parched with thirst. Soon all were very footsore. At night they rested on branches and grass under the open sky. The porters lit fires around the camp to keep lions and other wild beasts away. More than once the roar of lions awakened the missionaries. They all did reach Lukuledi safely.

A hut of clay and bamboo, utter poverty and want were their welcome. But the Lord in the little bamboo chapel was the center of Lukuledi Mission. The altar had been fashioned of crates and boards. With courage and zeal the sisters set to work, visiting the sick and gathering the children for instruction. They rejoiced whenever a dying patient asked for baptism or when the saving waters opened heaven for a baby. According to the theology of those days, the missionaries were convinced that by baptism these persons were saved from hell. However, baptism was administered only to patients who had been sufficiently instructed, when there was no hope of their recovery, or when the sick themselves had expressed a desire for baptism.

Sister Bernardine soon learned a great missionary lesson, one which she was to apply all through her long life: The African people would open up to Christ when she took time to chat with them. Having mastered the Kiswahili language, she became the priest's "minister of the

exterior.” In every mission and until her old age, Sister Bernardine gladly went out to visit the people in their homes.

Lukuledi Mission lacked water. So in 1898 the station was transferred to Nyangao. When Sr. Marcella died, Sister Bernardine became the superior of the community in 1903. She continued her errands of charity, walking many hours to seek out any Christians or pagans who were sick. Father Leo Lang called Sister Bernardine his “assistant pastor.” She was like the Good Shepherd who sought out countless needy members of his flock. God blessed the missionaries’ efforts, and the Christian community at Nyangao grew and flourished.

The 1905 Maji-Maji uprising against the German colonial power disrupted everything. All settlements of whites, even missions, were in danger. On August 14, five Benedictine missionaries on safari to the interior were killed: Bishop Cassian Spiss, two brothers and our Sisters Felicitas Hiltner and Cordula Ebert. This was in the southern part of the country, in an area of the district of Liwale called Mikukuyumbu.

An attack on Nyangao followed on August 28. The mission was destroyed shortly after the missionaries had fled into the bush. They were pursued and overtaken by the rebels. Sister Bernardine knelt next to Sister Walburga when the latter was shot in the hip. She heard her pray, “Dear Savior, I offer you my life. Save the others!” The pastor, Fr. Leo Lang, raised his hands for a last blessing. Suddenly the attackers, suspecting magic, fled in panic. The missionaries hurried off in the opposite direction. Only at nightfall did they notice that Sister Walburga was no longer with the children running at the end of the line.

The night hours after this discovery were probably the most agonizing ones in Sister Bernardine’s life. There was no way of locating Sister Walburga in the dark. They had been struggling through the bush for hours, disoriented and totally exhausted. Fatigue may have dulled their sorrow somewhat.

After seven nights and days of hiding and running, the survivors from Nyangao reached the coast at Lindi. They had been in constant danger of death from the rebels and wild animals, were famished and thirsty, their clothing in tatters, bloodied and dirty. It had been a real way of the cross for them. They attributed their escape to Sister Walburga’s sacrifice of her life.

Sister Avia Marschner died from the exertions of the flight soon after their arrival in Dar es Salaam. Sisters Bernardine Hefele and Helena Lettner left for recovery in the Motherhouse. Far from discouraged by their experiences, the missionaries used their recovery time for the study of languages and for acquiring new skills and knowledge.

In 1908 they were one more sent out to East Africa. Nyangao station lay in ruins. Sisters Bernardine and Helena worked in the new foundation of Ndanda. Here, as superior of the community, Sister Bernardine resumed her walks through the bush to reach the people. Good, competent Sister Helena died a year after her arrival in Ndanda, and Sister Hieronyma Holtkamp in 1912. Sister Bernardine nursed both sisters with utter devotion and took the loss of these dear companions very hard. She herself survived two attacks of the dreaded black water fever.

World War I started in 1914. By 1917 the German troops in East Africa were being defeated. When the British took over, the German missionaries were interned near Dar es Salaam. In 1920 the last sisters were expelled from former German East Africa. All their missionary work was disrupted.

The prioress at Dar es Salaam, Sister Thekla Munninghoff, was ill with cancer. In December 1919 she received the permission of the British authorities to travel to Germany. Sister Bernardine Hefele accompanied her and nursed her at Tutzing until Sister Thekla's death in 1921.

During her years in Tutzing, Sister Bernardine experienced the resignation of Mother Birgitta Korff from her office as prioress general (in 1920) and the election of Mother Melania Vollmer. On July 19, 1921, Sister Bernardine was chosen as one of the first general councilors of our congregation. At this time, Sister Bernardine also served as infirmarian of Tutzing and was the superior at Schellenberg, a rest home in the Alps for patients suffering from tuberculosis. Always glad to be of service, Sister Bernardine would say, "I can't just sit around idle waiting to return to Africa. I might as well be doing something!"

But her heart was in Africa. She kept inquiring about chances to return there. One day, eager for missionary service, she went to Mother Melania and earnestly begged to be sent to another missionary region. She came away beaming with joy, announcing that soon she would be leaving for the Philippines with a group of new missionaries.

Later on Sister Bernardine used to tell about that journey, begun on November 15, 1923. When the steamer had reached Aden at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula and turned east, her heart had given a lurch. She felt like running to the pilot and asking him to turn south instead, to East Africa—the land of her desire, her joys and labors and sufferings.

In the Philippines Sister Bernardine was warmly welcomed. Many of the sisters knew her. With her characteristic determination, Sister Bernardine at age 53 set out to learn English. She had soon mastered enough of the new language to supervise the primary students. She also pitched in wherever else her help was needed.

During her third year in the Philippines came the joyful news that German sisters could once more work in East Africa. Again Sister Bernardine went to her superior and asked if she would arrange her return to Africa. The sisters in the Philippines knew of her longing, and no one opposed her wish. They all rejoiced with her when in 1926 she was allowed to travel to Africa the third time.

In Dar es Salaam the Swiss Sisters from Baldegg had taken over the work of the German Missionary Benedictines. They received the veteran missionary until she could move on to her new post at Lithui on Lake Nyasa, more than 500 km to the west.

The station of Lithui lay in a populous area, numbering already many Christians, and abounding with children. This made sister Bernardine feel right at home. With her experience, she was able to introduce and guide the new sister missionaries who had arrived shortly before her.

Sister Bernardine, as had become the tradition in East Africa, took a special interest in the well-being of the women and girls. She was enthusiastic about the new hospital to be built and wrote many letters asking for contributions, medication and bandages. She also wrote a thank you note for every gift she received. "There is no limit to the good works we can do in the hospital," she used to say. "It is one of the best services we sisters can provide."

In 1922 Sister Bernardine was a delegate at the second general chapter of the congregation, held at the Motherhouse in Tutzing. At her departure from Lithui she joked, "I hope they won't grab me this time, as they did in 1920!" No, she was allowed to return to Africa in 1933.

In 1935 she was appointed the lead the newly-erected priory of Ndanda, in the southeastern region of the country, so dear and familiar to her from her earlier service. Though no longer quite as healthy and strong as she had been 20 years earlier, Sister Bernardine Hefele worked diligently from morning to night, still visiting the people who lived nearby, bringing joy, caring for the poor. Young couples would stop by for a little gift from Mama Bernardine on their wedding day and used to ask some words of wise counsel from her.

As prioress Sister Bernardine cared with motherly concern for her sisters. She was a ready listener and took a lively interest in their well-being and work. How she rejoiced with the teachers when a school inspection had gone well and the officials of the British government has expressed their satisfaction!

Probably the most joyful event during her term of office was the consecration of the new cathedral in Ndanda in 1938. Mama Bernardine could hardly wait for the exodus from the small old church. With the help of some girls, she took charge of keeping the new cathedral beautiful and clean. When she came home tired after having prepared everything for the great feastdays, the sisters would hear her say, "Oh, how I love our new church!"

At seventy years of age, in 1940, Mama Bernardine retired from the office of prioress. She spent some months with the sisters at Mnero Station. When Nyangao was to be staffed by sisters once again, Mama Bernardine went with them to her beloved old mission. The lorry that was to take them to Nyangao was late. Mama Bernardine tapped her cane on the road with eagerness, saying, "Well, we could walk to Nyangao!"

Here she hoped to spend her last years. But in 1942, during World War II, the German sisters were ordered by the British government to leave the coastal area and serve farther inland. Bishop Joachim Amman of Ndanda obtained permission for old Mama Bernardine and some sisters to stay at Nyangao. Her heart's desire was fulfilled, though she felt sad that most of the other sisters had to move. At that time, no one expected Mama Bernardine to enjoy sixteen more years of prayer and work.

Every day Mama Bernardine was at her sewing machine, doing an amazing amount of never-ending mending for the convent, hospital and school. She was grateful to God for her excellent eyesight. Her diminishing hearing did not bother her too much. At first she still cared for the parish church, planting many flowers and palm trees and rejoicing when the

balcony around the convent abounded with greenery and blossoms. With the utmost faithfulness and punctuality, Mama Bernardine gave the signals for community exercises. She declined an offer to sleep longer in the mornings. Until the very end, she took part on community prayer and meals.

In 1950, Mama Bernardine celebrated her 80th birthday, still spry and alert, able to enjoy the visit of the sisters who came from Ndanda to congratulate her.

A still greater celebration occurred in 1954 for her diamond jubilee of monastic profession. A solemn procession to the parish church for mass with a feastday sermon in her honor was held. At communion time, Mother Prioress Bilhild Gross and Sister Superior gently led the frail jubilarians to the altar and back again to her place. Later Sister Bernardine commented, "Never in my whole life have I witnessed such a 'concelebrated communion'!" As she was smiling happily at a bowl of lovely roses on her jubilee day, someone took what was to be the last photograph of her life.

Three more year of diligent daily ORA ET LABORA were granted to Mama Bernardine. Though hr physical strength was declining noticeable, she still took part in all the community exercises. Sometime early in 1957, she fell ill with pneumonia. M. Prioress Maria Lucas from Ndanda visited her. Thinking her condition serious, she asked Sr. Bernardine whether she would like to receive the anointing of the sick. "Certainly," she said. "I have had it already nine times." Joyfully and gratefully, she was anointed for the tenth time, and again she recovered.

On June 17, 1957, having attended mass and common breakfast, Mama Bernardine had a spell of weakness and asked for help. The priest was called and anointed her. Right after receiving the sacrament, her breathing stopped. There was no struggle at all. Sister Bernardine's rich and full life on earth had ended. She had asked God not to let her become bedfast in hr old age so as not to be a burden for others. Undemanding and simply she had lived. Just as simply, God allowed her to die.

Because of the hot season, Mama Bernardine was buried on the same day. Many Christians had gathered at Nyangao by the time a big truck from Ndnda brought priests and brothers and sisters. According to the new liturgical rites, the funeral service was held in the Kiswahili language. Mama Bernardine's body rests near the great cross and bougainvillea bush which overlook Nyangao Parish. Sister Bernardine experienced its beginnings, destruction, rebuilding and flourishing.

Sister Anna (Scholastika) Schemmer, OSB (1862-1941)

Home for Good

Reichenbach, St. Ottilien, Dar es Salaam, Tutzing

Katharine Schemmer from Seppenrade in Westphalia was a pioneer sister of our congregation. Born on December 2, 1862, she entered at Reichenbach in October 1886. Two

months after her arrival, on December 28, 1886, Father Andres Amrhein held the first simple clothing ceremony. Katharina received the monastic habit and the name of Sister Scholastika. Six other young women were in this group.

Sister Scholastika helped to build up our congregation in its beginnings. There were scanty meals, much manual labor, the cold of winter, and other austerities. But the sisters gladly bore these hardships as a preparation for their missionary labors. They were filled with ardent love of God and of each other. In the course of 1887 the young community was moved from Reichenbach to St. Ottilien, a small village in the diocese of Augsburg. By November of 1887 the first Missionary Benedictines—four sisters and ten monks—traveled to Rome. There they made their monastic profession. Then they boarded the ship for East Africa. Their first mission at Pugu was destroyed by rebels on January 13, 1889.

On Pentecost Monday, May 26, 1890, the first profession of the young congregation could be celebrated publicly in Germany at St. Ottilien. Sister Scholastika Schemmer was one of the 17 newly professed. Seven of them had already been designated for the mission in East Africa. On June 8, 1890, they left St. Ottilien together with six monks. They would resume missionary work, this time starting at the port city of Dar es Salaam.

The group arrived at Dar es Salaam on July 4, 1890. A few days later the sisters received their work assignments. Sister Scholastika, an excellent cook, was put in charge of the kitchen. This meant preparing meals for all the priests, brothers and sisters. Soon there also were patients, orphans and freed slave children. All expected from her “their food in due time,” which was no simple matter. Grains and vegetables had first to be planted and raised. Supplies were scarce. Meat was rarely available. For a time, Sister Scholastika’s menu had to alternate between mush of maize and mush of lentils.

Besides cooking, Sister Scholastika helped nurse her fever-stricken companions. She was put in charge of the community when the superior, Sister Agnes Zierden, was absent. The young missionaries in their heavy woolen habits suffered from the unaccustomed tropical heat. On a meager diet, they tried to do a full measure of daily work by German standards of Benedictine *LABORA*, while still being faithful to the *ORA*, the prayer of a monastic community. Soon the unfamiliar tropical illnesses and sunstroke took their toll of young lives.

Sister Scholastika was a kind and friendly person, cheerful and outgoing, and also quick-tempered. She seems to have given a sharp answer at times, failing against charity. It became known to Father Amrhein. On August 3, 1891, new missionaries came and brought strict new regulations from the founder concerning monastic. The brothers and sisters were not to speak to each other except with permission. Sister Scholastika was ordered to return to the motherhouse immediately. On August 28, 1891, she boarded the ship and left for Germany.

Upon her arrival in St. Ottilien Sister Scholastika was summarily dismissed from the congregation. Her vows had been made for five years. By some misunderstanding, her profession group had been told that their profession was valid only during assignment in Africa. Sister Scholastika was not only recalled from Africa, but expelled from the convent as well.

However, Katharina treasured her monastic vocation. She was convinced God had called her. Therefore, she appealed to the bishop of Augsburg. Eventually, her dismissal from the congregation was annulled because there had been insufficient reasons. In 1903, at the bishop's recommendation, Katharina was readmitted to St. Ottilien by Mother Birgitta Korff. Mother Birgitta had known sister Scholastika as a novice. She restored her to her initial rank according to her profession in 1890. But another sister had received the name of Scholastika in 1896. So now Katharina became Sister Anna.

She was sent to nurse's training in Munich. In 1904 she set out for East Africa a second time, full of new courage and ready to serve God in the mission with all her energies. She was sent to the station at Tosamaganga in the interior of what is today Tanzania. With love and patience Sister Anna taught cooking and other housekeeping skills to the African girls, and they responded to her efforts with affection and faithfulness.

Besides managing the kitchen, Sister Anna was ever ready to assist the sister nurse in caring for the sick. She had an open hand and heart for the patients. If amid the pressures of work she ever said a quick NO to a request, the sisters could be sure that soon afterwards, Sister Anna would do exactly what she had been asked. The small community at Tosamaganga was one heart and one soul in their ERA ET LABORA.

World War I also affected German East Africa. The British took over and expelled all German missionaries by 1920. Again Sister Anna had to return to Germany, this time to Tutzing. She did not stay there very long. That same year she was assigned to Schellenberg, a home in the Alps for patients recovering from tuberculosis. Later on, Sister Anna was in Honnef on the Rhine River and then in Olpe, in northern Germany.

At Olpe, Sister Anna was in charge of cleaning the vegetables. Watching her nimble, untiring hands, some people came to think that Sister Anna had made a vow never to lose a moment's time. In her advanced years she used to carry her knitting in her pocket, always wanting to use spare moments well. If the candidates at Olpe needed help with washing the dishes, Sister Anna was always available. She told the postulants, "Save your energy for Africa." Sister Anna had a lovely smile and a marked love for the young sisters. They in turn honored and loved her, just as St. Benedict desires in his Rule.

During World War II sister Anna had to leave her Benedictine community once more. On June 26, 1941, the secret police of Hitler, called GESTAPO, invaded the convent at Olpe. All the sisters were ordered to leave the convent by 6 p.m. that day. So at age 79, Sister Anna had to take refuge, first with relatives of Sister Gerburg Völker near Olpe, then with her own family. The Tutzing Motherhouse and the convent for elderly sisters at Wessobrunn had been confiscated by Hitler's GESTAPO earlier. So shelter had to be found elsewhere for the old and ailing sisters.

Sister Anna with several other sisters was received lovingly in Augsburg by the Franciscan Sisters in the convent of Maria Stern, who were known as the "Sternfrauen." God knows how painful this separation from her own community was for Sister Anna.

In Augsburg, Sister Anna made herself useful, as ever, peeling potatoes and cleaning vegetables. She was incredibly diligent. The Franciscan Sisters loved her dearly.

During her months in Augsburg Sister Felicia Breuer shared a room with Sister Anna. Once she overheard the nurse saying, “Well, Sister Anna, soon you will go UP to heaven.” Feeling quite healthy and active at the moment, Sister Anna had replied, “I would much rather go DOWN” (that is, to the kitchen).

In autumn sister Anna Schemmer contracted a severe cold and her lungs became congested. Death came quickly on November 20, 1941.

Her body was buried in Augsburg, but soul and spirit rest in the heart of God, where there is an end to all exile.

Sister Dominica Bonnenberg (1894-1987)

Missionary on Four Continents

Tutzing, Eshowe, Olinda, Norfolk

Aloysia Bonnenberg was born at Düsseldorf, Germany, on August 1, 1894. She was the oldest of the six girls of Theodor and Klara Bonnenberg. Three days after birth, the little girls was baptizes in the parish church. Her father was a distinguished physician. All the girls received an excellent, well-rounded education. Aloysia attended St. Mary’s High School for girls and the municipal teacher’s college, where she earned her diploma.

Love of nature, beauty, books, and music was cultivated in the happy home. Aloysia’s devout Catholic father planted in the hearts of his daughters a deep reverence for God and a strong sense of responsibility for the neighbor. Aloysia’s mother was a lovely, delicate woman, cheerful and selfless, a beloved companions to all members of her family. Besides the happy days with their parents, the six girls enjoyed delightful summers at their grandparents’ spacious villa in Würzburg.

At the age of seven, Aloysia accompanied her father on a visit to his two sisters, Ursuline nuns in Holland. She decided then and there that some day she would also be a nun, but not an Ursuline. Reading the magazine Heidenkind (Pagan Child) later on, she learned about Tutzing and felt that was where God wanted her to go. After some years of teaching in Düsseldorf and then serving as a governess, Aloysia entered in Tutzing in 1918.

During the revolution in Bavaria after World War I, the Tutzing Motherhouse was in danger. All the candidates and postulants were sent home or to cloistered convents in safer places. When Aloysia was about to leave, she met Mother Birgitta, who questioned whether she should return home, since Düsseldorf lay in the zone occupied by the French army. Aloysia also doubted if it was wise for her to leave, and so she was allowed to remain in Tutzing. This encounter with Mother Birgitta occurred on the First Friday of November 1918, while the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the convent chapel. Other significant events of

her life took place on First Friday or Good Friday. Sister Dominica always had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

On December 18m 1919, Aloysia received the Benedictine habit and the name Dominica. Together with five companions, the first group under Mother Melania, she made profession on the feast of the Epiphany in 1921. Sister Dominica pronounced her final vows on December 30, 1923. One of her companions was missioned soon after their first profession, another sister somewhat later. Always yearning for missionary service in Africa, Sister Dominica used to search eagerly for her name whenever new missionaries were posted. She had to wait for 18 long years.

As a degreed and experienced teacher, Sister Dominica was needed more urgently in the Motherhouse. After first profession she taught at the preparatory school in Tutzing. Then for seven years she directed the aspirants at the Mission School. Being so eager to spread the Gospel, Sister Dominica animated the future missionaries to make sacrifices, bear difficulties, and live simply (for example, giving up scented soap, which would be a luxury in Africa). She initiated the girls into monastic life and prayer, enlivening her lessons with poetry, music and artistic visuals. Though quite strict and therefore feared by some students, Sister Dominica was remembered gratefully by the many sisters she guided during their aspirancy.

Sister Dominica's superiors recognized her literary gifts. She contributed to the Missions-Echo and other publications and also wrote biographies of our missionary sisters. In her old age, Sister Dominica once commented, "For 18 years I served the missions by preparing future missionaries, drilling them in English, and then publishing their mission experiences!"

Those 18 years of yearning were happy one, however. Sister Dominica treasured the chanting of the Latin liturgy at the Motherhouse and the community. As the Hitler regime began to oppress religious communities in Germany, all able missionaries were sent out from Tutzing. At long last came also Sister Dominca's turn. She was jubilant! On April 4, 1936, she received the mission cross and set out for South Africa.

For 14 years, Sister Dominica engaged all her energies and creativity and zeal in the Zululand of South Africa, in what was then Eshowe Priory. She eagerly studied the ways and complex language of the Zulu people, then taught at the secondary and primary schools in Eshowe, Nqutu, Entabeni, Mahlabatini, Cassino and Inkamana. Besides teaching, she wrote poetry, translated and produced drama, composed songs, painted, and became quite skillful at restoring statues artistically.

After one lively religion lesson on heaven and hell, Sister Dominica asked her students where they wanted to go after death. All preferred to go to hell! "But why?" she asked. The children said, "We want to be with our people!" Her poster showed a hell full of grinning black devils.

What a failure! Sister Dominica searched for a better approach. A few days later she heard the boarders screaming with fright. The cause of the terror was a green frog, which symbolized evil and danger to the Zulu girls. Quickly Sister Dominica took the little creature

out of the dormitory, earning the admiration of her students. Here was the solution for her religion lesson! On the new teaching poster, hell was swarming with green frog devils!

Some sisters remember that Sister Dominica's keen intelligence caused her to teach above the level of her students. When our sisters opened the hospital at Nongoma, Sister Dominica was sent to Durban for x-ray training and assigned to health care.

At Durban and Nongoma sister Dominica met enthusiastic promoters of the Legion of Mary. Edel Quinn, its zealous Irish envoy to Africa, recuperated from tuberculosis at Nongoma. Sister Dominica had great devotion to Mary and worked zealously with the Legion of Mary groups.

Whether teaching or taking x-rays, Sister Dominica always took time to visit people in their homes, helping the needy, sharing her ardent faith, preparing catechumens for baptism, and assisting the dying. She was familiar with the ways of the Zulu people and urged others, also the clergy, to foster personal contacts. Ever in search of better ways to spread the Gospel, she gave the impression of being critical and dissatisfied. If she got little response, Sister Dominica would appeal to her higher superiors.

Her own sisters and Bishop Aurelian Bilgeri of Eshowe seem to have become weary of Sister Dominica's suggestions. On short notice, she was invited to accompany the bishop on a chartered flight to Rome for the 1950 Holy Year. She joyfully accepted. When she was ready to return, Sister Dominica learned that the bishop did not want her back in South Africa. This was painful.

All her life, Sister Dominica kept well informed of events in her beloved Zululand. She prayed for equal rights, justice, and peace among the peoples of South Africa. She was nearly 90 when Fr. Mkatshwa Smangaliso, Secretary of South Africa's Episcopal Conference, disappeared and was jailed. She wrote to the Minister of Justice to plead for Fr. Smangaliso's release, and when the priest was set free, she announced it to her community at Norfolk.

Back in 1950, Sister Dominica did not stay in Europe very long. In 1952 she was missioned again, this time to Olinda in northeastern Brazil. Perhaps too soon, she was appointed superior at Caruaru. She did not complete her term. One reason may have been that Benedictine moderation was not one of her virtues.

Next she helped with secretarial work at the academy in Olinda. Sister Dominica was often ahead of her time. She urged pastoral service among the poor people of Brazil's priestless areas. Once she was told rather curtly, "There aren't anymore poor people nowadays!" When after the Second Vatican Council most of her ideas were being implemented, Sister Dominica had just one regret—that she was too old to return to Brazil for pastoral service among the poor!

On learning that the Norfolk Priory was taking up mission work among the Indians at Winnebago, Sister Dominica offered to serve there. She arrived in the United States in 1958, ready to adapt to two new cultures, the immigrant American and the indigenous American ways. She taught elementary students at St. Augustine's Indian Mission and also cared for the little boys in the boarding home.

Soon Sister Dominica began visiting Indian homes on the two adjoining reservations of the Winnebago and Omaha tribes. She made a deep impression on the native American people. Years later they kept asking about the little nun who had talked to them of Jesus' love. She even did not hesitate to admonish the alcoholics who were lounging around on Winnebago's Main Street.

As an experienced teacher, Sister Dominica disliked duplicated worksheets, since they could stifle the children's creativity. She objected to standardized intelligence testing of her pupils. These tests were designed for white middle class children. Indian children often made low scores because of their different cultural background. But low test scores, added to poverty, could spoil a child's chances for later life.

With her strong sense of justice, Sister Dominica also objected firmly to harsh treatment of her little boarding boys. One bitter cold winter night, the police brought back some of her homesick runaways. Their toes were frozen. When ordered to spank the little boys, Sister Dominica said, "They've had enough punishment already." The priest in charge of the Mission told the local superior to excommunicate the "disobedient nun." Sister Dominica bore it calmly.

When she approached her eighties, Sister Dominica learned how to cook and gladly kept house for the community at Columbus. She forgot the baking powder in a cake once. Valuing the eggs and other ingredients, she put her "failure" through the meat grinder, added some milk, flour and baking powder and put the mixture in the oven a second time. Creative result: A delicious yellow cake!

Experiments with the Divine Office in English were made in the 1970s. Sister Dominica, always well prepared for prayer, stood up one day at Vespers before Psalm 108 was begun. She shut her ringbook firmly and said loudly, "Das bet' ich nicht!" (I won't pray that!) At first she objected to instrumental music other than the organ, and she wanted only Gregorian Chant. In time she mellowed and even liked the new songs. She regretted to the end of her days that the beautiful psalms of the Little Office of the Blessed Mother had been replaced in 1947 by those used in the Monastic Office.

Still full of missionary zeal, Sister Dominica engaged in biblical arguments with the intrusive Witnesses of Jehovah that came to the convent door. She never let them enter the house, but sat on the front steps with her Bible and refuted their accusations. After Mass one day she urged the pastor to make home visits, not wait for the people to come to him. Voices rose in pitch and volume in the sacristy -- then a sudden silence. A sister working nearby saw Sister Dominica leave quietly. A long time later, the pastor came out of the Church, stopped by and said, "Wow! Today I nearly slapped a nun! She really told me how to run my parish. When I got angry, she dropped on both knees and asked for my blessing!" Sister Dominica had remembered RB 71:6-8 in time.

Later on at Lynch Sister Dominica visited the patients in the hospital until the community closed that station. Her last years were spent in Norfolk -- tutoring and translating, reading, making rosaries, and praying much. She took part in community exercises as long as her health and strength permitted. She loved to participate in recreation. But medication to control

her annoying dermatitis lessened her hearing. If she skipped the medicine in order to hear better, she often had to leave recreation early because her skin itched so terribly.

Her spirituality was marked by a great loyalty to the Church. In her reading she came across the term "liberation theology" one day and asked a sister what it meant. Learning that the concept originated in Latin America, Sister Dominica spent a whole day updating herself, reading all the articles on liberation theology which she could find.

She kept informed of political developments as well. At age 91, tiny, thin, and frail in her walker, she insisted on casting her vote in the national election. Besides her infirmarian and co-sisters, quite a few citizens were amazed at Sister Dominica's sense of civic responsibility.

She had been a very independent spirit all her life and cared for herself as long as possible. Her death fit this pattern. Acute dermatitis and age had weakened her. In March 1987 she received the anointing of the sick once again, sitting upright in her wheelchair, surrounded by the community. At noon on April 2, the prioress asked for volunteers to take turns staying with Sister Dominica. While the sisters were signing up, the infirmarian returned to the refectory and reported she had just found her dead. Sister Dominica had quietly slipped out of earthly life, very well prepared for meeting her God.

After the legalizing of abortions in the U.S.A., as a physician's daughter keenly sensitive to this disregard for life, she had offered her body for medical research in order to atone for the killing of the unborn. The community knew of this last sacrifice of Sister Dominica, that there would be a Mass, but no burial.

Because of the age and condition of her body at her death, the university did not take up the offer, however. So there was a funeral. Her small human frame was laid to rest in the cemetery at Norfolk, like a seed awaiting new life. Sister Dominica was buried on April 4, 1987, the 51st anniversary of her missioning to South Africa. It was a fitting close to her missionary life on four continents of our earth.

Sister Ignacia Ambiel (1899 - 1993)

NOT AFRAID TO DIE, NOR REFUSING TO LIVE

Sorocaba Priory

After her cancer surgery the doctors gave her only three more weeks to live. That was in 1952. But God had other ideas. He gave Sister Ignacia 41 more years of loving and being loved. He took her to himself after she had borne much precious fruit, at the ripe age of 94 years.

Maria Cristina was born on October 20, 1899, to pious Swiss parents who had emigrated from their beautiful country to build a new life as farmers in Brazil. Ignacio and Maria Ambiel were among the founders of Helvetia, a Swiss settlement in the township of Indaiatuba in the state of São Paulo. Maria Cristina grew up with twelve sisters and brothers. From early childhood she learned to combine prayer and work.

The Missionary Benedictine Sisters directed a small school in Helvetia. Maria Cristina came to know them and felt attracted to religious life. At age 15 she entered our congregation. She began her postulancy in July 1919. On July 15, 1920, she was clothed with the Benedictine habit and received her new name, Sister Ignacia. On July 17, 1923, she made her first profession, and in 1926 her final vows.

For many years Sister Ignacia served as portress of the priory house in Sorocaba. The convent entrance always was one of the busiest places of the house – the poor, guests, students, teachers, employees are passing there. All found Sister Ignacia ready for any service, a living example of Benedictine hospitality. One sister recalled that Sr. Ignacia dearly loved the students and their families. She managed to know each by name. Day after day she welcomed the children with a smile and a good word, asking about their lessons. To the older girls she would discreetly speak about a call to religious life. Her smile and loving look impressed the little children so much that they used to make up excuses for going to the portry just to see her. Sister Ignacia truly lived the admonition of St. Benedict in RB 4, to "love the young."

Later on Sister Ignacia served as superior in Esteves Junior in the state of Santa Catarina and also at the farm of Aracoiaba da Serra. There she showed much concern about the poverty of the people. In 1966 she was transferred to Itapetininga, where for some years she took care of the sacristy.

To her sisters Sister Ignacia was known as a woman of prayer, very humble, happy, and ever ready to help. She was a quiet person and lived simply and poorly, putting all her trust in God. Though she had much pain in her legs, she never complained. She was a Benedictine faithful to the essentials of monastic life. The changes after the Second Vatican Council did not upset her. She edified her co-sisters by her example of prayerful living and her zeal for work. Sr. Ignacia loved and cultivated silence. She truly preferred nothing to the Work of God.

In her eighties, she did many small services of love for her busy sisters. A sister returning from rural mission work might find her dirty shoes, left at the entrance of the convent, nicely washed and polished on the veranda to dry.

Whenever she had spare time, Sister Ignacia was busy making rosaries for the greater honor of Our Lady, too many to keep a count. After the Liturgy of the Hours, Sister Ignacia often remained in chapel for personal prayer. There she also was found unconscious one day, lying on the floor of the chapel at Itapetininga. The doctor was called at once. There was a slight improvement in her condition, but her strength kept declining.

When the bell rang for Lauds on November 10, 1993, the sisters heard a noise. Sister Ignacia had fallen in her room. Doctor and priest were called, and she was anointed. She died the next day at 5 p.m. with the sisters surrounding her, praying and singing the "Suscipe." It was the feast of a saint dear to St. Benedict, St. Martin of Tours. Like St. Martin, Sister Ignacia had "neither feared to die, nor refused to live."

Sister Chrysostoma Schmidt (1892 - 1971)

ONE MORE LANGUAGE!

Tutzing, Wonsan, Taegu

A woman of many gifts was our Sister Chrysostoma:

- a musician who played the piano, organ and violin and taught others to sing and play and exercise
- a religion teacher with the "Missio Canonica" obtained in 1910 who could instruct adults as well as children
- a master and teacher of the German, French, English language
- a teacher of all subjects of elementary schooling.

Sister Chrysostoma was a perfectionist, not easy to please. As an instructor in the mission school and novitiate of the Motherhouse in Tutzing, 1923-1925, she was more feared than loved by some of her students. Life would mellow Sister Chrysostoma's perfectionism, but it never weakened her seeking of God, in whom is all fullness and PERFECTION.

On October 4, 1925, Sister Chrysostoma set out for the Far East as one of the four sisters chosen for the new mission in Korea. She was 33 then. High enthusiasm was tempered by the sacrifices and difficulties she expected to come her way. Great poverty, a totally different culture, a very difficult new language – all these called forth Sister Chrysostoma's courage and trust in God.

Maria Schmidt, born in 1892 at Mannheim, had taught for ten years before following God's call to monastic and missionary life. Having been admitted in Tutzing on March 1, 1921, she made profession on February 2, 1923. Sister Mathilde Hirsch, the directress of the large novitiate at Tutzing, gladly put Sister Chrysostoma's teaching expertise to use. Until 1933, Sister Mathilde also was the superior of the community in Wonsan.

On arriving in Wonsan, the sisters had lessons in the Korean language with a catechist once a week. He knew no German, so progress was slow. Sister Chrysostoma went outdoors, made friends with the children in the street, learning to understand and speak the Korean language from them. She studied the Chinese characters that were needed for reading the Korean newspapers.

Sister Chrysostoma had been designated for teaching in a girls' secondary school to be opened at Wonsan Mission. This project never was realized because of the Japanese control of Korea at that time. Nor would Japanese regulations allow Sister Chrysostoma, as a foreigner, to teach in the mission's elementary school which was subject to the government. So, what did she do? She saw there was need for the education of poor women, so she founded a school for the poor. Many parents could not afford the tuition fees of the public schools for their children. Young people past a certain age were not even allowed to register.

Sister Chrysostoma's first classes for the poor girls were held on the 'maru' (porch of Korean homes). Later she moved into a shed, and eventually some rooms were built on the second floor of the kindergarten for the School of the Poor. Word got around that Sister Chrysostoma was giving excellent lessons. Day by day the number of her girls increased. In the four-year program of the school, she tried to cover all the subjects required by the public grade schools. As a good missionary, Sister Chrysostoma gave her greatest care to the religious instruction and character formation of the young women. She trained the Korean candidates and young Sisters as her assistants in teaching the girls in the School for the Poor.

From 1926 until 1946, Sister Chrysostoma was the directress and taught in this school, putting all her heart, her creative energy, and her ingenuity and diligence into raising the lower-class women's lot. In 1925, a poor woman in Korea was truly what she was called, "an-hai" (THE THING IN THE HOUSE). She was known as 'mother of our little one' once she had borne a child.

About 500 girls and women received schooling from Sister Chrysostoma in those 20 years. Many of them were baptized.

In 1931-1932 Sister Chrysostoma also served as subprioress. She sang well and gave music lessons for the novitiate. She adapted German melodies to Korean texts for use in the liturgy.

Having mastered the Korean language better than most foreigners, Sister Chrysostoma faced a new challenge. Korea had been under cruel Japanese oppression since 1905. By the late 1930s, the Korean language was forbidden to be taught, even in the elementary schools. Japanese was prescribed and enforced. What did Sister Chrysostoma do? She acquired a good knowledge of the Japanese language and continued teaching!

In August 1945, after the defeat of Japan in World War II, the Russians moved into northern Korea, and the Communists ruled the land. All private schools were taken over or closed. Sister Chrysostoma instructed women in the faith and prepared children for their first communion. Groups of men, forced to attend communist indoctrination at the workplace, came to Sister Chrysostoma at night to discuss questions of faith – God, creation and evolution, etc. These conversations were held at great risk to herself and the men. Sister Chrysostoma also continued to visit families, until, fearful and being discriminated against for their faith, people asked her not to come anymore.

The missionaries were increasingly limited in their service. The sisters' rice fields had been confiscated by the Communists, and food for about forty sisters was difficult to get. Sister Chrysostoma learned Russian and gave piano lessons to the children of the military officers and physicians. She also served as an interpreter when some Russian ladies asked the sisters to sew dresses for them. In this way she helped sustain the community.

Then, in the night of May 10, 1949, the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Wonsan Priory (and the monks of Tokwon Abbey) were arrested by the Korean Communists and imprisoned at Pyongyang for three months. As a sensitive and refined person and approaching 60, Sister

Chrysostoma suffered, possibly more than the others, from the terribly cramped and unsanitary prison, from the injustice and uncertainty and the cruel treatment.

The Missionary Benedictines - brothers, sisters, and priests - were kept in a labor camp in the northern mountains of Korea. Unaccustomed to heavy manual labor, Sister Chrysostoma had to struggle on the steep, stony fields at Oksadok. During those four terrible years, her poetic gift was an outlet. She wrote on tiny scraps of paper, which were later copied into a little notebook. Her poems, always quite serious even when she had written for community entertainment, now reflected her inner desperation, her hope for liberation, and her struggle to bear the unfair treatment with faith and love and trust in God's final victory:

AS YOU WILL

I wanted to become your sower, casting Your Word on earth.

Now you yourself have prepared the field and have laid me there like a grain, as the seed.

I wanted to labor in your vineyard, active and hard-working.

Now I have become the grape, blood crushed in the hot wine-press of suffering.

I wanted to live as an apostle, bearing witness to you.

Passive now, I am nailed to the Cross, while your enemies are scattering the flock.

You did not want my gifts. You wanted me to be the victim.

So, Lord, quiet my heart! A grape, a grain of wheat, I wish to serve you.

(1950-1951 - freely translated by Sr. Matilda)

Sister Chrysostoma's keen power of observation added humor to life in the camp. She quickly sized up new guards and often was the first to find descriptive nicknames for them.

Among the seventeen Missionary Benedictines who died during those years of cold and hunger at Oksadok were our Sisters Eva Schutz and Fructuosa Gerstmayer. The yearned-for freedom for the 18 surviving Sisters dawned in 1953, when the government of North Korea suddenly called them their "honored guests" and they were sent to Germany by Transsiberian Railway.

In the Motherhouse, no news about their fate had been received for over four years. After Compline each day, a prayer for OUR SISTERS MISSING IN KOREA had been offered. On January 24, 1954, they were jubilantly welcomed home! Ten of the 18 sisters and many of the monks resumed missionary work in South Korea within a few years of their release.

In Germany, Sister Chrysostoma had a happy reunion with her two brothers. As a member of the community at Bernried, she edited the Missions-Echo (1954-1956) and gave organ lessons to some novices and postulants. One of these recalls that when the group of 18 missionaries from Korea arrived in Bernried for recuperating, the novices, not knowing the sisters, had felt awkward and shy in greeting them. Sister Chrysostoma had sensed it. Going to the novices, she put them at ease by asking their names and getting acquainted with them.

The returned missionaries were delighted to learn that fifteen of our Korean sisters had escaped to South Korea, had found each other, and had started the priory of Taegu. They rejoiced in its growth. At age 65 Sister Chrysostoma asked to return to Korea, and her desire was fulfilled. Already in April 1956 she and Sister Gertrud Link boarded a steamer. They reached Taegu in May.

Twelve more fruitful years of missionary work in Korea were given to Sister Chrysostoma. As in the past, she instructed doctors and students in the faith, encouraged religious vocations (such as our Sister Prisca Kim), and gave music lessons in the novitiate. She helped newcomers learn the Korean language, taking them to meet children in an orphanage and helping them to know the people. In her later years she visited patients in the Fatima Hospital. For the young members in the novitiate community, she made translations of the Latin Office, our Book of Customs, the history of our Congregation, etc. How happy she was whenever former pupils from Wonsan came to visit her! She rejoiced to learn that in spite of great difficulties, they had remained faithful Christians.

In January 1968, there was danger of an invasion by North Korea. Sister Chrysostoma's heart was giving her trouble, and she suffered from spells of anxiety which immobilized her. When another sister returned to the Motherhouse, Sister Chrysostoma was advised to go with her. Leaving her beloved Korea was not easy, but she realized that at age 76 she could not face flight or imprisonment anymore.

Back in Germany, Sister Chrysostoma was once again at Bernried. Quiet and pious, small and frail she had become. She now diligently typed the annals of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in Korea, producing three large, beautiful volumes. Carefully she pasted in many photos, printing the captions precisely and neatly. Since her eyes were weak by January 1970, she wrote in her diary with evident relief: "The annals are all finished!"

After this labor, Sister Chrysostoma continued writing letters and knitting. Yarn was donated by friends and relatives. Her fine artistic sense for color and harmony resulted in shawls for Korea that were both warm and beautiful. Often students and converts she had instructed in Korea would visit her in Bernried.

On September 8, 1971, the golden jubilee of Sr. Blandina Koller was celebrated at Wessobrunn. Sr. Chrysostoma gladly went along. She met Sr. Christophora Rettinger, one of

her companions at profession. Sr. Christophora had been missioned to the Philippines in 1923. The two "classmates" had not seen each other since then. The jubilee and the joy of reunion did not seem to have tired Sister Chrysostoma. She was exceptionally lively at recreation in Bernried and attended Compline.

About 1:30 that night, Sister Chrysostoma was found on the floor of her room unconscious. She was anointed and taken to the infirmary in Tutzing and died there on September 12, 1971. It was a Sunday afternoon and the common feastday of the name of Mary. Many sisters were in her room, praying and singing. Sister Chrysostoma drew her last breath just when the sisters at her bedside had finished singing the *Suscipe* and *Salve Regina*.

Sister Gertraud Gantert (1891 - 1989)

LONGING FOR GOD

Tutzing, Olinda, Rome

On January 13, 1989, the oldest Missionary Benedictine Sister alive was Sr. Gertraud Gantert, 97 years of age. She died on a day very special to our congregation, the hundredth anniversary of the destruction of our first mission station in Africa, Pugu. For Sr. Gertraud, it marked nearly a century of yearning to see her God face to face.

Born at Heidelberg on August 21, 1891, she was baptized Helene and grew up with her six brothers and sisters in a family of deep faith. She completed teacher training. For some years she taught in a school of domestic science, becoming its head teacher. Helene was tall of stature and dignified in her bearing.

In 1922 Helene followed the Lord's call and entered in Tutzing. She began her novitiate on July 28, 1923, receiving the name of Gertraud, a variant of the name of the great Benedictine mystic, St. Gertrud of Helfta. Her novice directress was Sister Mathilde Hirsch. Sister Gertraud made her first profession on the feast of Mary's Assumption, August 15, 1924. By September of that year, she and her companion in profession, Sr. Sigillinde Weber, were on their way to their mission assignment in northeastern Brazil, Olinda.

From 1924 until 1936, Sister Gertraud taught at the teacher training college at Olinda. Besides giving them a well-rounded education, she also tried to teach the girls practical self-reliance in caring for their future families. Her efforts to teach the young women from the upper classes cooking and household management met with skepticism at first, then with approval. Sister Gertraud also gave lessons in the novitiate at Olinda. Until old age, she was fond of Brazil, the land of her missionary service.

Sister Gertraud took on the tasks and challenges of her long life with utter generosity, with a deep sense of responsibility, and with resoluteness and energy. Much perseverance, constancy, fidelity and suffering were required of her. She endeavored to accept and integrate her experiences lovingly and prayerfully.

In 1937, Sister Gertraud was recalled to the Motherhouse in Tutzing to serve as directress of novices. Some of her former novices from the first years recalled that she seemed insecure and was very strict. She may have felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of her new task. The numbers of the novitiate in Tutzing were large, even though screening was quite rigorous then, and any candidate of doubtful vocation was sent home.

1937: 35 novices and 75 postulants; 1938: 38 novices and 50 postulants; 1939: 28 novices and 70 postulants; 1940: 49 novices and 29 postulants

What a challenge these many young women must have been! As "Magistra," Sister Gertraud was responsible for their spiritual formation. Her "Zelatrix," Sister Ingberta Schön, instructed the girls in the practical matters of convent life. Sister Angela Bödecker, secretary to the novice directress until 1941, responded to the inquiries of potential candidates.

Her novices described Sister Gertraud as a good teacher, clear and forceful in making her point. Diagrams made her lessons and conferences easy to remember. She was a model of faithfulness and punctuality in observing the Rule. She also was quite human and understanding, respectful and fair. For example, the candidates who were city girls returned from the convent farm at Kerschlach one day, exhausted from digging up thistles. Next morning, Sister Gertraud went out with them, wanting to feel how they felt. She herself practiced the self-denial which she taught to her novices - not reading letters right away, taking kitchen duty on free days, etc. She was reasonable in giving the candidates their assignments. To one who knew nothing of cooking and expressed her fear of it, Sister Gertraud said, "What good would you be to Sister Deodata in the kitchen?" Another novice, expressing her delight with kitchen work, promptly got assigned to the garden.

Sister Gertraud was a spontaneous, big-hearted person and could be quite sudden and enthusiastic in her reactions and not always gentle. But the novices sensed her love and appreciated her honesty. She personally gave the night blessing to the sick. Also the parents of the candidates felt her empathy and compassion.

The novices were most deeply touched by Sister Gertraud's profound life of prayer. She took the time to pray. At the Divine Office and at the Eucharist she was reverent and wholly attentive, evidently immersed in God. She tried to lead each candidate towards a personal experience of God's love before her profession. Deep love for God was to her, as to Fr. Amrhein, the basis of missionary service. Sister Gertraud, however, was unlike Fr. Amrhein in her choice of spiritual reading for the novices. With all her great love for the mystics, she did not want them to read such works as St. Teresa's Interior Castle, fearing that they might produce illusions of extraordinary holiness.

Sister Gertraud's impressive stature and her dignity in descending the stairs to the parlor impressed one candidate at their first meeting and moved her to enter. However, Sister Gertraud was not stiff, and she had a good sense of humor, being able to laugh also at herself, and making the recreations cheerful.

It was during Sister Gertraud's ten years as novice directress of Tutzing that World War II began (1939) in Europe. In 1941 the Motherhouse was confiscated by the Hitler government.

Formation had to continue in secret, while the novices were cleaning vegetables in Tutzing, and from 1941 to 1945 in the kitchen of the military hospital at St. Ottilien. Clothing and profession rites were held secretly at 4 a.m. in the seminary church.

After the war, between August and December 1945, 18 candidates entered in Tutzing. Most of them were of more mature years. One remembers a motherly embrace and a comment on her lovely braided hair before being taken to Vespers. In 1946, Sister Gertraud again had 21 novices in her care.

That year, she was designated for a possible new foundation in Spain. During an excursion, a sudden rain made her seek shelter with her novices in a dark shed. In that unlikely setting, jubilant about the prospect of seeing the town of Avila, Sister Gertraud told her novices all about St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. The novices after the war found Sister Gertraud consistent, but no longer so strict. Neither did she actively humiliate them. One who was very homesick got a little verse to cheer her up: "Das Heimweh schenk ich Dir. Gib mir Lieb und Gnad dafür!" (I give you my homesickness as a present. Give me love and grace in exchange.) A postulant who found the quiet Sunday afternoons in the convent nearly unbearable was sent with three others on a stroll through the village of Tutzing. Sister Gertraud's personality had mellowed with the years into a generous humanity.

In her later years, Sister Gertraud kept up a lively correspondence with many of her former novices, sharing their joys, giving encouragement, proud of their accomplishments. One who became prioress in Africa got a happy line from Sister Gertraud, "You have far surpassed my expectations!"

In 1947, Sister Gertraud was appointed superior at Olpe and in 1953 at Weiterdingen. Novices coming from Olpe and Weiterdingen in 1937 had not always felt accepted by Sister Gertraud. As superior and formator in these smaller communities, she initiated a number of postulants into monastic life with gentleness and great freedom before they began the novitiate. They felt that Sister Gertraud liked them, enjoying their company. Easily fired up with future possibilities, Sister Gertraud was delighted when a well-known singer entered as a candidate. When the girl with the lovely voice left again, Sister Gertraud was very disappointed.

Sister Gertraud could be very sharp in her reproofs to the sisters, but she did not bear grudges. Her sometimes gruff exterior hid her growing desire for human nearness and love.

She was very conscious of the financial straits of the Motherhouse and tried to save on expenses. Always of robust health and not in need of doctors or medication, she never pampered herself. Even at age 80, she did not want a hot water bottle for warming her feet. But her very strength and good health also made Sister Gertraud less understanding of the needs of others, such as the mothers recuperating at Weiterdingen.

The infirmarian and the sister in charge of heating did not have an easy time with Sister Gertraud as superior when she tried to economize excessively. However, when they spoke and reasoned with her at the proper moment, she would listen. The sisters appreciated their superior's good example - kneeling among them for the weekly confession, asking forgiveness

after failures, living very simply. From Bernried, where she served at the home economics school as secretary and librarian from 1959 to 1961, Sister Gertraud wrote a touching four-page letter to Weiterdingen, asking forgiveness of one sister for her harshness towards her.

In 1961, at age 70, Sister Gertraud was summoned to Rome to serve as a general councilor of our Congregation. She held this position until 1967. She also gave German lessons to the junior sisters at the Generalate house, making them memorize German fairy tales to tell during recreation. Her strong, cheerful personality added zest and fun to community life.

Sister Gertraud attended the two sessions of our general chapter of renewal mandated by the Second Vatican Council, in 1967 and in 1970. She had a deep sense of responsibility for our Congregation. On returning to Bernried, she vigorously supported the spiritual renewal. Ever emphatic, she would state her views with a tap of her shoe or a fist on the table. For example: "The most urgent task for us would be to learn English well!"

Bernried was the novitiate of the Tutzing Priory at that time. As a former directress of novices, Sister Gertraud took a keen interest in the monastic formation of the new generation. If the novices at mealtime burst into loud laughter (painful for persons using hearing aids), Sister Gertraud would show disapproval, say half-joking, "They ought to laugh one at a time!" Because of the rather strict separation of the novitiate from the sisters with final vows, most of the younger members were in somewhat distant awe of Sister Gertraud.

She supervised study periods and cared for the library. Even before the home economics school at Bernried was closed in 1972, Sister Gertraud had started helping in the kitchen. For years her responsibility was cooking the soups, which she did with enthusiasm. She had copied many recipes into her little notebook. Onions were the "soul" of her soups. After her memory failed, Sister Gertraud moved to the kitchen corner and peeled potatoes. It was not easy when she had to give up even this work.

The Lord gradually took from this capable and energetic woman all the faculties for accomplishment. Her eyesight failed, then her hearing, and her physical strength declined. In 1988 she was no longer able to take part in the Divine Office. She was taken to the infirmary in Tutzing for total care. The last months of her life were a time of great suffering for Sister Gertraud. "I cry out for love!" one could hear her shouting, even in the chapel. Her cry was answered on January 13, 1989.

We can list the stations of Sister Gertraud's life, but only God can measure how much love and greatness she shared and how many lives she shaped in her lifetime. At last she attained the profound union with her God which she had desired throughout her life.

Sister Ehrengardis Wehrmeister (1902 - 1978)

TRIED AND TRUE

Tutzing, Eshowe Windhoek

Therese Wehrmeister, born at Immenstadt on Februar 24, 1902, came to Tutzing in her teens and entered the mission school. She acquired a facility in English and obtained her diploma, having passed the exams with distinction. This proved a valuable preparation for her future mission assignment.

All of Therese's great steps in monastic life, so eagerly desired by the young candidate, occurred in the month of August: The beginning of postulancy in 1923, novitiate in 1924, first profession in 1925. On the day of her first vows, Sister Ehrengardis also received her mission cross. She gave herself to God forever by perpetual vows on August 15, 1928, in Inkamana, South Africa.

For 22 years Sister Ehrengardis devoted all her energy to teaching the young Zulu people at various stations: Inkamana, Entabeni, and Eshowe. She served as prioress of Eshowe from 1935 to 1947, continuing to teach at the same time.

Sister Ehrengardis fostered good relations between the Missionary Benedictine Sisters and monks in Zululand. She was loved and appreciated. Her long term of office included World War II, when the German missionaries were restricted by the government of South Africa. Some priests and brothers were interned, and the government assigned the teaching sisters without regard for the needs of mission stations.

In 1947 Sister Ehrengardis attended the third general chapter of our congregation, which was held at Fribourg, Switzerland. Mother Sigillinde Weber was elected prioress general, and Sister Ehrengardis became the vicaress. The sisters who met her at this chapter described her as a refined, amiable and wise person, calm and balanced in her views.

During World War II, Mother Mathilde Hirsch had to reside at Norfolk, Nebraska in the U.S.A. Mother Sigillinde and her councilors were able to return to Tutzing. Sister Ehrengardis took time to teach English to the aspirants in the mission school. She had a delicate sensitivity for others' feelings. One junior sister, designated for Japan and happy about it, was puzzled when suddenly the mission assignment was dropped. In those days, junior sisters were not usually informed of the reasons for changes. Sister Ehrengardis took time and explained the reason to the young sister: The two small communities in Japan were not able to provide formation for juniors, and therefore only sisters with final vows would be sent to Japan. The junior sister never forgot Sister Ehrengardis' kind thoughtfulness.

As vicaress in Tutzing, Sister Ehrengardis missed her missionary work and was homesick for Africa. She also suffered from poor health. The prioress general and the prioress of the Motherhouse both resided in Tutzing, and the role of the vicaress was not well defined. This may have created tensions to make Sister Ehrengardis feel ill at ease. Also, the sisters in Zululand kept pleading for her return. Less than two years after her election as vicaress, she resigned.

Sister Ehrengardis was appointed prioress of Windhoek in Southwest Africa, today's Namibia. In March 1949 she left with six new Africa missionaries. For four years she was a provident, energetic prioress, dearly loved and appreciated by her sisters in Windhoek Priory.

She used her initiative and varied experience, eager to meet missionary needs in southern Africa.

In the 1950's Bishop Aurelian Bilgeri, OSB, of Eshowe in Zululand desired to have more missionary sisters in his diocese. As the Motherhouse in Tutzing was not able to send him as many sisters as he wanted, he contacted Sister Ehrengardis, whom he knew and esteemed since her years as prioress at Eshowe. He wanted her help in establishing a new diocesan congregation.

Bishop Bilgeri invited Missionary Benedictine Sisters serving in South and Southwest Africa and in Angola, about 150 sisters in all, by a personal letter, to join his new congregation. The plan was explained as having the blessing of the Holy Father. It caused considerable confusion among our sisters.

Mother Sigillinde Weber was in Brazil for visitation. When she returned to Tutzing in May 1953, she learned that Sister Ehrengardis, the prioress of Windhoek, had received excommunication from the Holy See. In June 1953 Sister Ehrengardis left Windhoek in order to help Bishop Bilgeri in Eshowe draft the constitution for his "new" congregation.

Bishop Bilgeri's plan could have caused a split in our Congregation, putting about 150 sisters in southern Africa under the control of the local bishops. The prioress general is responsible for fostering and preserving the unity of the congregation. Mother Sigillinde acted quickly. She had Sr. Ehrengardis' excommunication revoked and sent a special visitor to speak with the sisters in the priories of Eshowe and Windhoek. The fact that in September 1953 our generalate was transferred from Tutzing to Grottaferrata near Rome also was helpful.

Sister Ehrengardis had no wish to cease being a Missionary Benedictine Sister. Why then had she agreed to the plan of Bishop Aurelian? There are several possible reasons:

- She seems to have thought that our Generalate was duly informed and in agreement with Bishop Bilgeri's plan.
- She had a great respect for Church authorities, a Benedictine tradition, and she trusted his judgment concerning the needs of the Church in southern Africa.
- Probably she was not fully aware of the effect which the bishop's project would have had on our Congregation.
- During World War II our sisters' dependence on the local bishops and clergy in Africa had increased.

Sister Ehrengardis was commanded by the prioress general to return to Southwest Africa by ship, not as prioress to Windhoek. Her assignment was to Ombalantu, our remotest station in the northern Ovamboland, near the Angolan border. She submitted to the decisions of the Generalate in all humility and obedience.

Sister Ehrengardis arrived at Ombalantu in December 1953. She wrote a letter to all our sisters in southern Africa, asking their forgiveness for the confusion which her actions had created. As a simple teacher in Ombalantu, Sister Ehrengardis eagerly learned the

Otshiwambo language and became familiar with the customs and mentality of the Ovambo people. This was to become a preparation for another great responsibility about to be entrusted to her.

In 1956, Sister Ehrengardis was called to guide the African Benedictine Sisters of Oshikuku. This community, begun by our Sister Reginalda Weis in the 1930s amid great difficulties and opposition, grew and flourished under Sister Ehrengardis' care. For twelve years she did her best to give the young sisters from the Ovambo and Okavango peoples a solid monastic formation. They gratefully remember her loving, motherly ways.

During her last years at Oshikuku, Sister Ehrengardis' memory began to fail noticeably. A younger sister was assigned, first to help her, and then in 1968 to lead the African sisters. Sister Ehrengardis was assigned to Swakopmund on the Atlantic coast, which was to be her last mission. She obediently accepted new tasks at the hospital office there. Her mind was keen as ever, but she had to compensate for her failing memory by carefully writing down any information and tasks given to her.

In spite of her cross, Sister Ehrengardis served as superior of the community at Swakopmund from 1968 to 1971, still her courteous, thoughtful and resolute self. Then she helped in the sewing room, cared for the sisters' chapel, and did little tasks about the house. She went on errands to the bank and post office until she was no longer able to go out alone.

In August 1977 she needed a mastectomy. The surgery hastened the decline of her mental powers. The last months of her life were very hard for Sister Ehrengardis and her nurses. She died peacefully and quietly at Swakopmund, Namibia, on February 23, 1978. She is remembered for her gentle courtesy and refinement, for her respect and faithful love towards all her superiors. Until today, Sister Ehrengardis is held in high esteem among the Benedictine Sisters of Namibia and Zululand who knew her as their prioress.

Sister Turibia Prässl (1902 - 1987)

LITTLE SEAMSTRESS

Tutzing and Ndanda

A tiny baby girl was born on February 23, 1902, to Margarete and Michael Prassl in the village of Gaisthal in southern Germany. Michael was a humble bricklayer. The baby was baptized on the same day she was born and named Margareta. She grew up with her six brothers and sisters. Margareta learned sewing. She worked in Munich as a seamstress until she joined the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing in 1924.

As a candidate, Margareta was sent to the convent farm at Kerschlach. Money was scarce in the years after World War I, but vocations were abundant. At her clothing, Margareta received the name of Turibia. She made profession on August 29, 1927. That year 39 young sisters were admitted to vows. On September 21, 1930, shortly after her final profession,

Sister Turibia was missioned to East Africa, today's Tanzania, which then was under British control.

For one year Sister Turibia was in Peramiho to learn Kiswahili, the main language of the land. Then she was sent to Ndanda. There she spent most of her life. Only during World War II the British authorities relocated the German sisters from the coast to the interior of the country. Sr. Turibia served at Sofi in the central region of Mahenge from 1942 to 1946. During this time she was the superior of the community at Sofi.

Sister Turibia was a quiet, diligent worker. She never took home leave in Germany. In her later years the sisters were given vacations. Even then, Sr. Turibia was never without her needle. For fifty years, until 1981, she worked faithfully and tirelessly in the sewing room at Ndanda. "Mama Turibia" to her African helpers, she and they did a great service to the Ndanda Mission.

Sister Turibia was small of stature and slight of body. The sisters nicknamed her "Schneiderlein" (little seamstress, and also any small, lightweight person) or "Turibulum" (incensor). The latter was a play on her name and her figure, but it also fit her personality, steeped in adoration, available to be used for service.

No one remembers ever hearing an unkind word from Sister Turibia. She was both lovable and loving. A sister who lived with her for ten years described her as "a dear co-sister who was easy to like. She was quite inconspicuous, never drawing attention to herself, yet always present when needed – a valuable community member. She loved silence, but was ever kind and knew how to speak a good word at the fitting moment. I cannot remember anyone ever complaining about her."

From 1957 to 1967, Sister Turibia served as subprioress to Mother Prioress Scholastica Sperisen. This post requires practical, loving care for the sisters' needs and humble, self-effacing support for the prioresses.

Sister Turibia's assignment in the sewing room enabled her to take part in community life very regularly and faithfully. She had great zeal for liturgical prayer. She dearly loved spiritual reading and was especially fond of the writings of St. Gertrud the Great. One could often see her with her books, and she liked to talk about St. Gertrud.

In her last years Sister Turibia's vision became very poor. She could no longer read. Sister Adelgard, of the same age and her companion in the infirmary at Ndanda, had good eyesight. She would faithfully read to Sr. Turibia. Even in the infirmary, Sister Turibia set a very firm daily prayer schedule for herself. She was able to take part in the daily community mass until a month before her death.

About a week before her death, it became evident to the nurses that Sister Turibia would soon be called to God. One thing had often puzzled them about her. When they tried to talk with her about death, she would not respond. How astounded were they, therefore, at her reaction, when they told Sister Turibia that her death was imminent: She lit up with exuberant joy! Although she suffered much physical pain during her last days, Sister Turibia neither complained nor gave any signs of impatience. No, she laughed, looking forward joyfully to

meeting her Lord. When the sisters bent over her bed, she embraced and kissed them. This had not been her way before. She had always been a rather quiet and reserved person. However, at heart she must have been a great lover, like St. Gertrude the Great. As Sister Turibia ran her way to seeing God face to face, his great love manifested itself in Sister Turibia's affection for her sisters.

During her last days, while still able to speak, Sister Turibia joined in the short prayers her sisters spoke with her. When she could no longer talk well, she just added an "Amen." On July 14, 1987, the faithful little seamstress of Ndanda entered into eternal joy and rest.

Sister Valeriana König (1901 - 1985)

LAMP OF LOVE

Tutzing and Peramiho

An unusual, large sanctuary light burns beside the tabernacle in the chapel of the Missionary Benedictine Procure at Eldoret in Kenya. It was fashioned from the sturdy lantern which lit the way of Sister Valeriana König in 47 years of missionary service.

The pioneer sisters in Tanzania say that a lantern was one essential item for a safari in East Africa in the olden times. Others were quinine to counteract malaria, and the tropical hat to prevent sunstroke. The lantern was needed to light one's way in the dark nights and to guard against snakes and other dangers. God knows how many steps Sister Valeriana walked by the light of this lantern to care for people in Peramiho and the surrounding stations. Also, only God knows how many hours she knelt in adoration before the tabernacle, drawing her amazing energy from union with Jesus, the God with us.

Kunigunde König was born at Ehrlach in southern Germany on September 23, 1901. She was baptized two days later. Her father was a farmer. Early in life Kunigunde had to help her mother with raising many younger sisters and brothers. She was used to plowing and other hard farm work. All her life, Sister Valeriana remained closely united with her family in caring love. She offered special prayer and sacrifice for a brother who had joined the Freemasons. It was a great joy for her when he renounced freemasonry and practiced his Catholic faith again.

In February 1925 Kunigunde entered in Tutzing, and in August 1926 she became a novice. She made her first profession on August 29, 1927, and her final profession three years later. Already before the outbreak of World War II, the Nazi regime of Hitler had begun to oppress the Tutzing Motherhouse. Therefore, many sisters were sent to the missions. Sister Valeriana was one of them. In 1938 she was missioned to East Africa.

She stayed for some time in Peramiho to study the Kiswahili language. By 1939 she was assigned to care for the sick at the station of Mpitimbi. Later she served at Mango, Chipole, Lituhi, Nangombo and Luilo. In Nangombo, between 1956 and 1958, she built up a hospital. In 1967 Sister Valeriana was appointed superior of the community at Luilo.

Sister Valeriana had only elementary schooling when she entered. She received nurse's training as a sister. By remaining a humble learner all her life, she kept improving her healing skills and brought relief to many sufferers. Sister Valeriana diligently and eagerly read journals of nursing even in her old age, ever ready to use new methods and medications.

By observing an Anglican missionary doctor at Liuli near Lake Nyasa, Sister Valeriana learned how to do surgery. From the "Mnggi miti shamba," the traditional African healers, she found out the uses of snake and crocodile fat as a base for salves and as a medicine against tuberculosis. She also became skilled at massaging. Occasionally she would use a divining-rod for diagnosing an illness. To some younger co-workers who were more clinically trained, Sister Valeriana's methods seemed odd or old-fashioned. Actually she was ahead of her time by combining scientific knowledge and the wisdom of native healers and their natural remedies. Her greatest gift was her deep compassion for the sufferers. It led her to assess carefully and then act promptly and decisively. This "bush nurse" was a truly effective healer.

In her daily life as a Missionary Benedictine Sister, Sister Valeriana seemed to experience no tension between prayer and work. She calmly met each demand as sent by God. One of her companions wrote, "Our Sister Valeriana took time for the African people. Often I saw her standing and chatting with the mothers, a kindly smile lighting up her face. She exemplified the proverb that a good word is above the best gift."

Being used to hard physical work since her girlhood, Sister Valeriana was blessed with exceptional physical stamina and endurance. Called out many a night to assist a patient, she was yet able to work cheerfully the next day. Not surprisingly, she did fall asleep quite often while quietly sitting in chapel.

In 1952, when the African Benedictine Sisters of Saint Agnes moved from Peramiho to their new motherhouse at Chipole, four of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters accompanied them. Sister Valeriana was sent as their infirmarian. From 1954 to 1955 and again from 1958 to 1967, she served as the superior, "Mama Mkubwa," of the African Benedictine Sisters. Sister Valeriana's practical good sense and her deep, sound spirituality enabled her to guide the African sisters firmly through their initial difficult years at Chipole. She was energetic and brave in the face of obstacles, and she had a large vision for their future service.

The spiritual director of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes at Chipole desired a purely contemplative community: The African Benedictines were to pray and work in the convent and in the fields but engage in no apostolate. Such divergent visions created problems. Sister Valeriana could not please everyone.

The dedication of the convent church at Chipole was intended to be an affair just for the sisters' community. Was the bishop ever surprised when large crowds of the faithful showed up for the celebration! He asked Sister Valeriana why so many people had come. She suggested the faithful could best tell him why. The bishop asked the people what had brought them to Chipole that day. They replied, "If our sisters aren't going to be helping us, they might as well not be here." The bishop understood. Today the Benedictines of Chipole combine monastic life with pastoral work, health care and education.

The move to Chipole in 1952 meant that Sister Valeriana had to give up her full-time nursing. Only some first aid supplies for the convent infirmary of Chipole were provided by Peramiho. We have no indication how much this sacrifice cost her. She simply obeyed.

However, the people of the Peramiho area knew Sister Valeriana's marvelous gift of healing. They kept coming to her when all other help had failed. Lacking rooms to care for the sick, she managed to have some simple wooden huts built for patients at Chipole. Stories were told and retold about her:

- Sister Valeriana had performed an urgently needed leg amputation on an open veranda. Despite the unsterile environment, the surgery was successful.

- One day a young woman on a stretcher was set down before the convent door. She had been badly mauled by a leopard and was terribly emaciated. For three days she had been carried over hill and dale to Chipole. Sister Valeriana washed her wounds with a disinfectant. Then she applied some penicillin, which had just arrived from the Norfolk Priory. Against all expectations, the young woman recovered.

- A young man had been in a fight and was injured by a spearhead which stuck near his heart. No doctor had dared to do surgery. Resolute as she was, Sister Valeriana swiftly removed the spearhead, saving the young man's life. Her fame spread even more after this deed.

Sister Valeriana dearly loved the African Benedictine Sisters. She gave them spiritual conferences, standing up for their rights and treating them as equals of the European sisters. She realized that the African sisters needed a solid education. She bought the same dishes for them as for the German sisters. She cared for appropriate clothing and insisted on a balanced diet with meat.

She required much from the sisters she was forming. Today her judgment and wisdom are recognized and honored, but in her lifetime she often encountered incomprehension and opposition.

The years of Sister Valeriana at Chipole coincided with the rise of nationalism, independence from England in 1960, and the forming of the new nation, Tanzania. Of course, this created its own tensions and some anti-European feelings. Sister Valeriana not only prayed and worked much, she also suffered much during that time. She remained firm in her insistence on monastic discipline. Always giving generously of herself, she expected the same of others. Pretended illness in order to avoid unpleasant work could not fool Sister Valeriana's keen nurse's eye. She was sometimes accused of "mkali," that is, harshness.

Sister Valeriana's love and foresight helped the African community grow towards autonomy. In 1965 Sister Norberta Komba became her councilor, in 1966 "Mama Makamu," the representative, and in 1967 she was appointed superior of the community. In 1973 the Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes of Chipole elected their first African prioress general, Sister Esta Mbawala.

Sister Valeriana served as a delegate from Peramiho Priory to the general chapter of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in Rome in 1967 and 1970. After 1968 she was "just a nurse" again. She spent her decreasing strength in Luilo, then at Peramiho Hospital. For a time she handed out medications. When her alertness failed and she was no longer reliable in the dispensing of medicines, she was told not to go to the hospital anymore. If she felt hurt, she did not show it. She quite simply requested another assignment. She was sent to the kitchen to peel potatoes and onions. No one ever heard her complain. When someone asked whether she missed her nursing, Sister Valeriana said she liked working in the kitchen: She could just keep praying.

All her days Sister Valeriana had been attentive and helpful to others. No service ever seemed too much for her. She noticed when a helping hand or a substitute was needed, even before she was asked. She handled inconsiderate and even rude behavior with great gentleness. She was simple in her clothing and shoes, but observant about the needs of the others. Her humility and obedience were exceptional. For example, she had a very nice room and loved it. One day it was needed for another sister. Sister Valeriana immediately moved out, without a word of protest. When she received chocolates and other candies, she would ask permission to give them to the doctors' children.

Despite her capacity for working long hours without resting, Sister Valeriana was not addicted to work. All her life, she spent every free hour before the tabernacle. She had an ardent love and devotion to the suffering and crucified Jesus and daily prayed the Way of the Cross.

On July 6, 1985, Sister Valeriana fell, fracturing several bones. She endured her last painful cross. After three days of suffering, God called her to eternal adoration on July 10, 1985. The silent large tabernacle light in the chapel of Eldoret keeps speaking of Sister Valeriana König, of her love for the Lord Emmanuel in the tabernacle, and of her loving service to bring healing to his suffering sisters and brothers.

Sister Columba Park (1906 - 1983)

MISSIONARY OF THE POOR

Wonsan-Taegu

Sister Columba, named Anna in baptism, was born to good Catholic parents of the rural nobility at Sunan in North Korea. She was the fourth daughter. Anna was a good-natured child among eight children, dearly loved by her family.

On April 12, 1928, Anna entered the convent of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters at Wonsan. At that time, Korea was under Japanese domination and oppressed. As a postulant Anna was sent to Japan to study medicine, but in April 1931 she was recalled and assigned to help at the clinic at Wonsan.

Before becoming a novice in October 1933, Anna was sent home for several months to regain her health. In 1928 her grandfather had opposed her entering the convent. Anna had been secretly let down over the wall of the family estate. Now she had to face her grandfather. She spoke with conviction of her Benedictine vocation and told her grandfather that she was happy in the convent. He was reconciled with her decision and received baptism. So Anna had begun her missionary work right in her own family.

After her health was restored, Anna became a novice and received the new name of Columba. She made her first and final profession in Wonsan. Then Sister Columba nursed the sick in the clinic for the needy at Hwa-Ryung and at St. Mary's Clinic at Chyung-Jin. Everywhere she was a zealous missionary, giving religious instruction when not tending the sick.

In August 1945 World War II was nearing its end in Asia. Russian soldiers marched into northern Korea. Sister Columba and her companions returned to the priory house at Wonsan. She took care of the patients in the clinic. At that time she contracted typhoid fever and suffered from complications which caused damage to her heart.

In 1948 Sister Gertrud Link became the prioress at Wonsan. She appointed Sister Columba as her subprioress, the first Korean sister to hold this responsible office and a part of God's loving Providence. When the Russians withdrew, the Communists took over North Korea, restricting and then persecuting the Church. After Bishop Boniface Sauer and several monks of the Missionary Benedictines' Tokwon Abbey had been arrested, Sister Columba had placed her Japanese medical diplomas in a hole dug near the statue of the Blessed Mother in the garden. She did not want those papers to cause trouble for her sisters, but hoped to retrieve them later on.

At 11 p.m. on May 10, 1949, the North Korean Communists were at the entrance of the convent at Wonsan. The sisters had good underwear and clothing ready, expecting nothing good from the Communist government. The Communists were sealing off the rooms, confiscating the convent. Mother Prioress Gertrud Link with half a dozen sisters went to the chapel, where that same day several hundred hosts had been consecrated at Mass. They took this spiritual bread for their journey to the uncertain future. Amazingly, no Communists intruded until all the hosts had been consumed.

Sister Columba's heart trouble flared up, and she lost consciousness. At Mother Gertrud's insistence, the infirmary was opened once more to provide medicine for Sister Columba. Then the 20 European sisters were taken away to prison. The 19 Korean sisters had a week of "re-education" in the prison. Then they were told to get married and be "useful citizens" and to return to their families.

Sister Columba now was responsible for the Korean sisters. She maintained a house at Pyong-yang, capital city of North Korea, until February 1950. Thus she could keep in contact with her dispersed sisters. On May 10, 1950, she fled south to Seoul with two Benedictine deacons. There she found accommodations in a dormitory of the convent of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres.

But already on June 25 of that year, the Korean War broke out. Again Sister Columba had to flee, this time to Pusan in the far south of Korea. By and by 14 more sisters from Wonsan came together. They found refuge in a priest's house with sisters from other congregations. Some of the sisters began pastoral work at Kwang-ju.

In October 1951 the Missionary Benedictine Sisters moved into a two-room house belonging to the bishop of Taegu. It had been the home of a catechist. One room, the chapel and living room of the sisters, served as a clinic during the day. The close living quarters were a problem for the community. The postulants who joined the sisters had to sleep in the clothes closet. A year later, Sister Columba was able to establish Kongpyong-dong station and to open St. Anthony's Clinic. She remained there as superior until 1959.

In 1951 Sister Othmara Amman had been sent from Switzerland as a support for the Korean sisters. She reported a mission experience: "Two days ago Sister Columba baptized a twelve-year old boy. He had had a tooth extracted. We were surprised to be called to the home. The boy's mother told us that her deceased husband had appeared to her in a dream and had told her the boy would die. He wanted her to have the boy baptized, just as he himself had received baptism before his death. A few minutes after being baptized, the boy did die. He was his mother's only child. Even in her sorrow, the woman was greatly consoled by this grace."

In 1962 Sister Columba was called to the priory house at Sin-am-dong in Taegu, where she cared for the needy at the clinic. She devoted herself to the very poorest and visited them in their huts, checking whether they had food, clothing, and other necessities. After referring the sick to the hospital, she would make sure they received appropriate treatment.

From 1965 until 1971 Sister Columba was the subprioress at Taegu, much loved and appreciated by the sisters. She was a deeply pious, peaceable, tactful, and realistic sister. Thus she could mediate when tensions arose and promote harmony in the quickly growing community. She rarely lost her composure.

Sister Columba could be quite firm and persistent when she was convinced that an action was right and necessary. Otherwise, she was rather modest and humble in daily life, even somewhat reserved. She was a person who inspired confidence.

Sister Columba was an attractive personality, able to oversee and manage well. When younger sisters were to be entrusted with tasks of leadership, she was assigned to Song-ju, then as superior to Kyong-san. She cared for the farm, the vineyard, the orchard of peach trees. She was a loving, provident superior who cared well for everyone. She readily did any manual work, cleaning, gardening, and tending the animals.

The novitiate members often went to Kyong-san to help with the harvesting and to enjoy nature. Although Sister Columba was always eager to get good income from the sale of grapes and peaches, she used to give the most beautiful fruit to the young sisters, taking the lesser quality for herself. After 1980 Sister Columba was in Sin-am-dong Station. Then she returned to Kyong-san.

Already in April 1983, a woman from North Korea who had been helping Sister Columba in the laundry noticed how often she felt tired, having to sit down in the garden to take a rest. Yet in spite of pain, loss of appetite and weakness, Sister Columba kept working.

Finally, she was admitted to Fatima Hospital in Taegu. On June 13, 1983, cancer of the bile duct was diagnosed. After her dismissal from the hospital, Sister Columba tried to cause a minimum of work to the infirmarians. But when she was no longer able to care for herself, she gratefully accepted help from her sisters. She wished to die quickly and faced death with acceptance. She asked for a very simple funeral, like that of poor people, and fitting for a poor religious.

Three days before her death, Sister Columba pleaded with all the sisters who visited her: "Love each other sincerely! Show reverence and patience towards each other!"

On the day of her death she asked to speak privately with the sisters to whom she was especially grateful and to whom she wanted to express special wishes. She remained conscious and mentally clear until the end. In her pain she kept crying, "Jesus, save me! Jesus, I love you! Jesus, free me from temptation!" During her final two hours, she only could say, "Jesus! Jesus!" Having once more received the priestly blessing, her breathing became easier. Sister Columba Park died on July 19, 1983.

Sister Bernadette Harrison (1907 - 1989)

PIONEERING ALL HER LIFE LONG

Norfolk, Rome, Manila

Our one and only Canadian Missionary Benedictine Sister (as of 1997) was born on July 14, 1907, at Toronto, in the central province of Ontario. The little girl was baptized Mary Leona Beatrice on August 4. Her parents, John Robert Harrison and Johanna Monig, had three daughters and three sons, the oldest of whom became a priest and monk of St. Basil. Sister Bernadette remained close to her family all her life, especially to her priest brother, Father Canning Harrison.

Bee, as her family nicknamed her, had a great devotion to Mary from childhood. Her own mother's influence, the family custom of praying the rosary together kneeling after supper in May and October, and the Marian devotions and processions of her parish shaped Bee's piety. Twice she was chosen for the honor of crowning the statue of the Blessed Mother during the May devotions.

Bee was oriented to a missionary life by one of her teachers, Sister Xaveria, who was very kind to her and who spoke in glowing terms of the missionary work of St. Francis Xavier. Already as a little girl, Bee had played nurse and enjoyed talking with old people. She attended grade and high school in Toronto, then one year at St. Joseph College. On completing a three-year nursing program at St. Michael's Hospital, Bee graduated as a registered nurse.

She was sending medical supplies to our Sister Ermenilde Morrissey and the lepers at Ndanda, East Africa. Sister Ermenilde, on learning of Bee's interest in becoming a missionary, referred her to Tutzing. From there Bee was advised to contact Sister Diemud Gerber, the prioress of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in Raeville, Nebraska, in the United States of America.

Bee entered at Raeville in June 1933. On June 18, 1934, she became a novice and received the name of Bernadette, both for Bernadette of Lourdes and because her favorite younger sister's name was Bernadette. Sister Bernadette Harrison was the second North American novice in Raeville and the last one to be clothed with the red cincture. She loved it, for to her it was a vivid sign of a missionary's readiness to give her life for her faith in Jesus Christ. As a novice, Sister Bernadette enjoyed the quiet Nebraska countryside in remote Raeville. She liked her daily tasks of chopping wood, herding the cows, caring for the parish sacristy, and learning all about monastic life and the Rule of St. Benedict. One day while memorizing chapters of the Holy Rule in the pasture, Novice Bernadette caught one of the cows munching her Holy Rule! On the solemnity of St. Benedict, July 11, 1935, Sister Bernadette made her first profession.

That same summer, the sisters opened Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Norfolk. Sister Bernadette engaged all her youthful energy and ingenuity in this new foundation. She was then the only registered nurse, not only in the pioneer community at Norfolk, but in the whole priory. Her dedication and professional excellence won her the respect and love of doctors and patients and their families. The community was proud of Sister Bernadette and trusted her.

Returning from Raeville in 1938 after making her final profession, Sister Bernadette had new responsibilities added to her nursing work, laboratory and x-ray. She also was appointed as the cellarer of the community. Sister Bernadette had an open eye and a big heart and attended to the sisters' needs even before they had to ask. Personally, she always practiced strict poverty and simplicity of lifestyle, using up her things to the very end. As cellarer, she knew how to give a good word at the right moment, just as St. Benedict wished it. She served others kindly, thoughtfully, promptly and generously.

Sister Bernadette in her later years liked to share an experience as cellarer which reveals her attitude and personality. On being appointed, she requested a job description and got this brief one:

"See to it that the sisters have what they need." One need struck her next time she entered the chapel: New books for the Divine Office! The sisters' books looked so old and worn. Joyful and eager in her new authority, but without consulting anyone, Sister Bernadette ordered new copies of the Antiphonale Monasticum for all the sisters. When the big shipment of new books arrived, she promptly distributed them in chapel. What a shock to the prioress, however, who got the big bill! And what a disappointment to Sister Bernadette who was told she had exceeded her competence and the community's finances! She had to return the entire shipment of books immediately, since the Sisters had insufficient funds for such an expenditure.

During World War II, Mother Mathilde Hirsch, the prioress general of the Congregation, resided in Norfolk. She often called on Sister Bernadette for help with important business because of her skill in public relations, her care and attention to detail, and her dignified way of meeting people.

In 1945 Sister Bernadette was asked to prepare the opening of Holy Trinity Hospital at Graceville in the state of Minnesota, some 300 miles north of Norfolk. Being the community's only driver and a very good (and fast) one, Sister Bernadette often covered the great distance between Norfolk and Graceville.

Like the beginning in Norfolk ten years earlier, the start in Graceville demanded much hard work and creativity from Sister Bernadette and her companions. Only many years later did she mention how deeply she was hurt at this time. She had been appointed the superior of the pioneer community prior to the opening of the hospital. Then, for reasons never explained to her, an older member of the pioneer group was made the superior in her stead. Sister Bernadette met such difficulties with faith. One sister who worked with Sister Bernadette as a junior professed greatly admired her kindness, understanding, and cheerful disposition. Sister Bernadette was her "favorite sister," her model as a Missionary Benedictine Sister.

In 1956 Sister Bernadette was once more appointed as superior at Graceville and began her service. It proved to be a very brief term of office, as the general chapter of 1957 elected Sister Bernadette as general councilor. She was the first councilor of our Congregation who had not received her formation at the Motherhouse in Tutzing and the first from a New World culture.

Sister Bernadette's ten years in Grottaferrata near Rome were a difficult pioneering experience, but also wonderful. In her later years she once commented that as a general councilor she had had more time for leading a truly spiritual life than any time before or since then as a Missionary Benedictine Sister. She accompanied Mother Maria Lucas Rauch on visitations in South and Southwest Africa, Angola, Korea, the Philippines, Switzerland, Portugal and Germany.

During her term as general councilor, the priory of Manila took on St. Paul's Hospital at Tacloban. It was the first Benedictine hospital in the Philippines. Sister Bernadette was loaned to the Manila Priory for this pioneering task. With her characteristic energy, Sister Bernadette applied herself whole-heartedly to the assignment. At her departure in February 1965, the gifts Sister Bernadette had brought to the project were named: Finding and training sisters to staff the hospital, untiring labor, much waiting, "German" precision (from her maternal ancestors), American efficiency (not always realized in the Philippines), and her provident care and concern.

Returning from Rome in 1967, Sister Bernadette was assigned a new pioneering task at Norfolk. St. Joseph Nursing Home was to open its doors to the aged of the Norfolk area in 1968. Sister Bernadette was appointed administrator and dedicated her full energy and varied skills to this apostolate. She was dearly loved by residents and staff and by the families of the patients and highly respected by business people and government officials. The employees at St. Joseph Nursing Home long remembered Sister Bernadette's tact and her versatile

helpfulness. She could pitch in for the nurses, help to clean up messes in the hallways or patient rooms, and cook dinner anytime the kitchen was short on staff.

In 1974 Sister Bernadette suffered a stroke and left-side paralysis. This slowed her down, leaving one leg partially paralyzed for the rest of her life. When she suffered a myocardial infarction with cardiac arrest in October 1979, she had to resign as administrator of St. Joseph Nursing Home. In December she underwent open heart surgery in Omaha. This left her with diminished emotional control, easily breaking into tears, which was a real cross for self-possessed, dignified Sister Bernadette.

After her recovery, Sister Bernadette became the convent librarian and faithful secretary to two prioresses, Pia Rottinghaus and Matilda Handl. Sister Pia used to call Sister Bernadette her "faithful hound" for her gift of prodding the prioress into action, always aware of due dates and thoughtfully anticipating the sisters' needs. Many sisters throughout the world treasure loving or funny greetings in Sister Bernadette's beautiful, distinctive handwriting. She never let a letter go out without some personal touch, bringing out of her treasury the new and the old, unusual and special cards she had saved up to give joy to the recipients.

Until just a few months before her death, Sister Bernadette continued service as the medical records consultant for St. Joseph Nursing Home, working in her infirmary room at the convent. To keep up her license, she took part in workshops at Norfolk, Omaha, and other towns of Nebraska, always ready to learn.

Sister Bernadette faithfully participated in the community exercises - nearly all of them. The singing practice on Friday evening was never her favorite activity. Over many years she managed to escape from it with a joke, taking duty at the parlor, or asking permission to retire early.

Having learned to give and take in her large loving family, Sister Bernadette was a great tease and loved being teased. She had a ready wit and could give smart answers. In recreation she was an avid player of "Aggravation," gleefully sending her opponents' pieces back to the starting point whenever possible. In her younger years she enhanced the Liturgy of the Hours with her organ playing and added sparkle to community celebrations with her spirited piano favorites.

Being exceptionally sensitive and tactful herself, in the habit of looking out for the well-being of others, Sister Bernadette felt unfairness and slights keenly. But she was able to take them without much ado, ever ready to forgive and forget.

While visiting her family after her golden jubilee of profession in 1985, Sister Bernadette suffered a fractured hip. She recovered and was able to move around with a walker or pushing her wheelchair. After her long life of cheerful, efficient service to others, Sister Bernadette found adjustment to life in the Norfolk infirmary difficult at first. She felt restless. Ever prompt and precise, she used to work rapidly on any work given to her. She had to be told when a task was NOT urgent, otherwise she would take no rest until it was finished. Once she joked that she must be "a hard nut for the Lord to crack to get at the sweet kernel." Gradually,

however, she came to enjoy the extra time for prayer accorded to the older sisters. She spent many quiet hours of adoration in the chapel balcony near the infirmary.

In October 1989 Sister Bernadette hurt her leg while moving about in her room. Due to her heart condition and her poor circulation, the injury failed to heal. Sister Bernadette lost her appetite and her will to live, withdrawing and becoming very quiet. On November 26, 1989, while the community in Norfolk was celebrating the Eucharist on the solemnity of Christ the King, Sister Bernadette entered the eternal Kingdom of her Lord, for whom she had lovingly pioneered so often.

Sister Mercedes Sarte (1909 - 1987)

LOVING AND BELOVED

Manila Priory

Sister Mercedes was born on the feast of St. Benedict, March 21, 1909, in Polangui, Albay, in the Philippines, to Clemente Sarte and Rosario Florin. Ten days after her birth she was given the name of Maria in baptism. Her family fondly called her Nenita. Mr. Sarte was a justice of the peace. He and his devoted wife raised their thirteen children in a loving Christian atmosphere. So it is not surprising that the oldest and youngest of their eight girls, Nenita and Teresita, became religious.

Maria spent her early years with the Missionary Benedictine Sisters at St. Agnes Academy in Legaspi City. Attracted by the Benedictine ideals, Nenita asked at the age of 25 to be admitted to St. Scholastica's novitiate in Manila. In June 1934 she became a candidate.

Her family readily and generously gave Maria to God. During her canonical novitiate, she received a letter from her parents, which she treasured and kept until her death. It read in part:

“Dear Nenita,

We are writing you this letter to let you know that anything may bring you happiness is our happiness too. You are our daughter, and you will remain such to us in whatever station in life and whatever step you may take. We are grateful to the community that has taken you into its fold, and it is our hope that you will always be worthy of their companionship. ... Believe us that you will always carry with you our love and blessing.... “

Sister Mercedes made her first profession in 1939, and in 1942 she pronounced her final vows. For 43 years her main apostolate was teaching grade school children at Tacloban, Bacolor, and Maasin. Trained together with others by our Sister Gertrude Brey, Sister Mercedes was an excellent elementary teacher. She also served as principal at Boac, Angeles, and Legaspi. God's Book of Life will tell how many young lives she touched as an educator.

In her later years, Sister Mercedes shifted from teaching to supervising the grade schools on the campus, enjoying the children immensely. She had a wide circle of little friends who wanted to chat with her before the flag ceremony, to share some of their chocolates, flowers,

and lemon drops during recess or unburden their little hearts to her. The love between the children and Sister Mercedes was mutual.

Sister Mercedes loved her own big family, keeping the loving letters of her parents, sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews in a little brown box. Her family extended hospitality to the Missionary Benedictine Sisters, sharing their abundant 'lanzones,' a fruit of the Philippines, with them.

But there was no undue attachment to her family in Sister Mercedes. Rather, she effectively extended her love to her Benedictine family, writing to her sisters on overseas missions and in the provinces of the Philippines. She kept them up-to-date on the activities of the Manila Priory by sending them clippings from the school publications and from the daily newspapers.

Sister Mercedes had a special love for the poor. She paid extra attention to the needy children among her charges. When she was assigned to the school information office, she and her faithful staff made altar linens for poor parishes. She loved to embroider the purificators and other items for Mass, using for her patterns the plants and flowers which she loved and cultivated with great care.

For many year Sister Mercedes served at the parlor in the priory house of Manila. Her habitual thoughtful love really blossomed in this assignment. She would spare no effort in locating a sister if there was a phone call for her. She always slipped something good onto the plates of sisters whom she knew to come after the regular mealtimes.

In 1973 Sister Mercedes underwent radical mastectomy. Her left arm was often swollen after the surgery. At one time, a lump on her neck was scheduled for surgical removal. On the morning the surgery was to take place, the lump had disappeared, and the examining doctor canceled the operation. Sister Mercedes always ascribed the event to Mary's intercession.

In 1987 her ailment returned, and her sufferings grew intense and almost unbearable. Standing or sitting became' excruciatingly painful for her. The only position she could tolerate was lying flat on her back, as though crucified, on her bed.

Sister Mercedes' mottoes had been:

- Pray without ceasing.
- Judge not, and you will not be judged.
- Humility is the starting point of being human.

She continued to live by her principles on her sickbed. On December 20, 1987, Sister Mercedes was taken to the hospital. Three days before Christmas, she quietly went home to her God.

Sr. Luzia Pak (1919-1950)

A MARTYR'S CROWN FOR MISSIONARY COURAGE

Wonsan - North Korea

Angela Pak was the oldest of three children. She was born to a happy and prosperous Catholic family in the village of Sunan in North Korea on October 14, 1919. Her father died while Angela was still small.

From early childhood, Angela developed a strong, active faith. She learned to help the poor and suffering with deep compassion. She grew up as a strong personality with clear convictions. Taller than average in stature, she impressed people at first sight by her fine appearance. The villagers of Sunan knew her as one who always spoke the truth. They admired her beauty, wisdom and sound judgment.

When her aunt, our Sister Columba Park, received the monastic habit at Wonsan, Angela attended the ceremony and was deeply impressed. She felt inspired to enter the convent at once.

While she was a candidate, Angela passed a test to become a music teacher. She was a smart and very active young woman, strong in enduring difficulties. As a novice, Sister Luzia had to wait longer before being admitted to profession. She was sad at first. Then Sister Columba told her, "It does not matter who makes profession sooner, but who gets to wear the greater crown of martyrdom. You must endure and wait with patience." Sister Luzia made her monastic profession on June 22, 1943. Just seven years later, she did receive the crown of martyrdom.

All during World War II, from 1939 to 1945, the sisters of Wonsan Priory were virtually isolated from the rest of the congregation of Missionary Benedictine Sisters. In 1945 the Russians entered North Korea. They limited the freedom of the missionaries but did not mistreat them. However, in secret the Russians prepared the way for the Korean Communists to take power at New Year 1949. Then the persecution began.

On the night on May 10, 1949, Communist officials appeared at the priory house in Wonsan and confiscated it. The European sisters were imprisoned for several months at Pyongyang, the capital city of North Korea. Then they were taken to the mountains in the north. At the labor camp of Oksadok, they suffered until their release in 1954.

The 19 Korean sisters were imprisoned at a "rehabilitation center" in Wonsan. They were denounced as lazy, useless citizens and were pressured to get married. A week later they were taken back to the convent to put on lay clothing and had to return to their families. The sisters said to themselves, "It is neither the convent building nor the habit that make the religious, but the heart and the spirit." All had resolved to remain faithful and to live their vocation as Missionary Benedictines whole-heartedly.

Sister Luzia and Sister Oliva, also a relative of Sister Columba Park, moved from Wonsan to Pyongyang, then to their home village of Sunan. Sister Luzia taught the children catechism

three times a week, fearlessly gathering them in the very meeting hall of the Communists. The children also learned to sing the church songs.

Some of Sister Luzia's relatives were Communists. Naturally, they weren't very happy with her activities. Yet until the start of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, Sister Luzia had no difficulty in living up to her Missionary Benedictine vocation.

Sister Columba Park had been chosen as subprioress of Wonsan by Mother Prioress Gertrud Link in 1948. When all the sisters were imprisoned in 1949, Sister Columba was put in charge of the Korean sisters. This was a heavy responsibility for her. In February 1950, she took a chance and fled to South Korea. She asked Sisters Luzia and Oliva to follow her at the next opportunity, fearing that once her escape became known, the two other sisters would have problems.

Sister Oliva was hard of hearing. Sister Luzia thought there would be great danger if during an attempted flight they were arrested and separated. If interrogated, Sister Oliva might give answers that would ruin the chances for the other sisters to escape to the south. So the two sisters stayed in North Korea while most of the other Korean sisters succeeded in fleeing south.

The village of Sunan had been peaceful. One of Sister Luzia's third cousins, once a hired man of her family, had become a high-ranking Communist official. He reported Sister Luzia to the authorities. On September 24, 1950, she was arrested.

It is not certain why only Sister Luzia was imprisoned and not Sister Oliva. Perhaps Sister Luzia's exceptional beauty had attracted notice. Also her strong sense of justice had made her aware of injustices of the government against the people, and she told her Communist relatives that they needed to convert and repent. She had continued teaching religion and singing. Witnesses agree that all these factors contributed to her arrest.

In the fall of 1950 the South Korean army pushed north. As it came near Sunan, the Communist army marched all its prisoners to a mountain. There they shot them. Various dates have been given, October 5, 11, or 12. Sister Luzia Pak was among the prisoners who were executed by the Communists at that time.

Sister Luzia remained loyal to our Lord Jesus Christ and kept her lofty religious spirit. She fulfilled the will of God, faithful to the point of giving her very life at the age of 31 years.

Sister Maria Liguori del Rosario (1906 - 1992)

WITH ACCURATE ACCURACY

Manila and Rome

"Contenta!" This single last word was uttered by Sister Liguori a few days before her death. It came after weeks of total silence on her sickbed, and after a twenty-year struggle with progressive paralysis of her limbs. Sister Maria Liguori del Rosario passed the final test

of her complete surrender to God with high marks, just as she had passed many lesser exams in her lifetime with utmost accuracy.

Emma del Rosario was a fascinating woman of outstanding accomplishments, a trailblazer in many respects. Born on November 2, 1906, at Locsin near Legaspi to Judge Manuel and his wife Magdalena del Rosario, Emma was driving her own car when few women in the Philippines were driving at all. She was an independent professional, wearing a bob-haircut, when she entered the convent as a late vocation, in 1937. At that time she had a bachelor's degree in pharmacy and a master of science in chemistry from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

Many firsts also marked Sister Liguori's convent life.

- Not long after her final profession on May 25, 1942, she became the first Filipina subprioress of Manila, serving under Mother Stefana Gachter. Her term of service was brief, however, due to her outspokenness.
- A few years later, she succeeded Sister Kuniberta as the first Filipina Directress of St. Scholastica's College in Manila.
- In 1957 she was to travel to Grottaferrata near Rome as the first Filipina delegate to a general chapter of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters.
- Before serving as general chapter delegate a second time in 1967, Sister Liguori was appointed to the preparatory commission to help implement the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council.
- Then she chaired the Central Commission, entrusted with revising and updating our 1934 Constitution and with drafting our Temporary Constitution of 1970.

Sister Liguori's "accurate accuracy" was a distinct contribution while she did the research on the charism of our Congregation. She traced our Missionary Benedictine roots to Father Andreas Amrhein., OSB, who founded the two Congregations of the Missionary Benedictines of St. Ottilien and of Tutzing. Sister Liguori's brilliant mind, mental discipline, thoroughness, and capacity for sustained hard work were a great asset in this assignment. So was her fluency in English, Spanish, and German.

This fluency in Spanish later prompted Mother' Gertrud Link during her first visitation in Brazil to call Sr. Liguori to help her communicate with the Brazilian sisters who spoke only the Portuguese language.

Sister Liguori had been sent to the U.S.A. for advanced studies and obtained a master's degrees in religious education and in clinical psychology. Ever attentive in the School of the Lord's Service, she was ready to continue learning and to serve in new assignments with her abundant talents. She was a teacher, registrar, librarian, director of guidance, and social action consultant in the schools. In the community she also was assistant cellarer, secretary to the prioress, and portress. She gave English classes to the novitiate and to sisters newly arrived in the Philippines.

Sister Liguori was a serious and sober thinker with a strong sense of personal discipline. She focused on the essentials and was not given to flights of fantasy and imagination. Her students remember her words at the end of a theology test, when she would say, "Please pass your papers without emotion!" This also meant 'without commotion,' for she liked her classes quiet, concentrated, and attentive. Some students feared her more than they loved her.

She expected the students to come to class well prepared with all the lessons ready. They even had to have half or quarter page sheets of paper on hand for surprise quizzes. When called upon in class to answer or recite, the students had to begin at once and not stammer, otherwise Sister Liguori would say, "Miss N., sit down, you do not know."

As directress of St. Scholastica's College she demanded strict discipline. After the flag was raised in the morning, all were to go to their classrooms two by two in perfect silence. Before dismissal, after the lowering of the flag with perfect attention of the students, they again went two by two through the corridors to the exit. Sister Liguori often stood in the passage. One girl, upon seeing her, made the sign of the cross. Asked afterwards why she had done it, the student replied, "Oh, Sister Liguori's person just made me do it."

Her honesty, wisdom, sound judgment, and strong gifts of leadership were remarkable. Still more memorable are her great love for our Congregation and her fidelity to monastic life. A brief visit in Bernried by Sister Liguori between 1967 and 1970 left a strong impression of her openness to new ideas and her readiness to contribute to our Congregation's spiritual renewal.

Whatever she did, she did very well - with accurate accuracy! As one aspect of truth, this thoroughness and care of Sister Liguori's also reflected her seeking of God, the full TRUTH.

At St. Scholastica's College in Manila, Sister Liguori introduced formally the Social Center connected with the school, the care for poor boys in the Leveriza area. Later on, at St. Scholastica's Academy at Marikina, she founded the Tuason Social Center. In the field of guidance Sister Liguori was the first to insist on the systematic testing of the students.

To implement the 1957 general chapter thrust of ongoing formation of the sisters, Sister Liguori was requested to prepare conferences for the Congregation. She produced 29 conferences on Pope Pius XII's encyclical letter "Mystici Corporis." These theological conferences were translated into German and Portuguese and sent to the priories. There was joy in the small local communities on receiving Sister Liguori's conferences. Soon after delving into them, however, there followed the sobering realization: Sister Liguori's high language of theology was above the level of the average sister. To be beneficial, the conferences had to be "translated" into simpler terms by someone with theological training, and few communities were so blessed.

Following her return to the Philippines in 1970, Sister Liguori wrote a series of 26 conferences on Mariology, which were circulated in the Manila Priory. These give glimpses of her great love for Mary. The 'Inang Poon Bato,' a statue of Mary, was her long-time companion in the sickroom. A sister-in-law, Mrs. Lourdes del Rosario, brought a statue from

Korea to her, the Virgin of Nanju. At the funeral mass, Marian hymns in various languages were sung in Sister Liguori's memory.

In 1976 slipped cervical discs required an 11-hour surgery. Sister Liguori's struggle with pain put an end to her active service, leading to her retirement and eventually confining her to the infirmary. Two decades of illness revealed her frail humanity in contrast to her great spiritual strength. There was physical weakness and yet a strong will, anxiety about death and yet the courage to live on in spite of pain, dependence for a person of such striking self-determination. These contrasts were not so much contradictions as signs of Sister Liguori's struggle to grow in holiness, her life-long *conversatio morum*. Even on her sickbed, Sister Liguori continued giving lessons to the members of the novitiate on our Constitution, history, and spirituality.

Sister Liguori possessed many human qualities that endeared her to people. In the Norfolk Priory Sister Liguori is tenderly remembered as the learned Filipina who anytime loved a Dairy Queen (a light ice cream). Having enjoyed her first one on a hot summer day traveling from Omaha to Norfolk, she'd point out each Dairy Queen stand the car passed. Drivers who later took Sister Liguori to other places of the American Midwest would stop for a Dairy Queen every so often.

Sister Maria Liguori del Rosario died on December 10, 1992, at the age of 86. She was buried on the third Sunday of Advent, GAUDETE, when the Church rejoices in the anticipation of the Lord's coming. Sister Liguori was already beholding the splendor of eternal TRUTH, whom she had sought and served with monastic good zeal and accurate accuracy all her life.