

In Memory of Sr. M Bertholda (Margaretha Rosina) Bauer OSB

born May 9, 1925

died October 11, 2009



On Sunday evening at Vespers, we Sisters sang the hymn: "The sun is setting, we gaze at the glow of evening..." A few hours later our dear Sister Bertholda was called home by God into the realm of his light and eternal joy.

Margaretha Rosina Bauer was born in Eitzgersrieth, Diocese of Ratisbon (Regensburg), on May 9, 1925, as the second child of the farmer Georg Bauer and his wife Anna nee Völkl and was baptized the following day. She grew up together with one brother and four sisters to whom she remained close in sisterly love. Already during and then after elementary and vocational school she helped on the family farm until she moved to an aunt as helper in her household and as salesclerk while her aunt's husband was in military service. After the war she took care of the household of another uncle who was widowed. After he had married again, Gretl – as she was called – wanted to realize her desire to enter the convent and become a missionary; but her uncle asked her to continue helping him in his store. In her biography of this time, she recalls one important experience: "Our store was in a quarter of factories and barracks. Here I came to know and understand our laborers, but I also realized how far our people were from God. Oh, how I wished those people would find their way home to God, our Father." This strengthened her desire to become a missionary, which she finally could realize in April 1949 when she was accepted by the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing.

One year later, on the Feast of the Annunciation, she was clothed and received the name **Sister M. Bertholda**. After one more year she could pronounce her temporary vows on April 2, 1951, and three years later, on April 2, 1954, her perpetual vows. Immediately thereafter, she was transferred to Rome where she reinforced the small community on the Aventine for five years. A station of her convent life was Kerschlach, 1962 to 1971. Then until the end of her life: Tutzing where she cared for the guests at the convent parlor for 24 years. One could write about the life of Sr. Bertholda the sentence from the 53rd chapter of the Rule: "Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for He is going to say, I came as a guest and you received me." In this service she could unfold her special gifts -- readiness to serve, friendliness, and an open heart for the poor and needy.

Sr. Bertholda was not strong, but she was tenacious, able to cope with stress and work. She herself reported that she was transferred to Rome because she was very much underweight and one was hoping for an increase in weight with different kinds of food such as olives and grapes. In Kerschlach, too, she was called "half a portion", but this did not prevent her from doing with zeal and energy any work entrusted to her, such as renovations in house and stables. Her lean body made her especially sensitive to cold and draft; therefore the Sisters

knew her only wrapped in several layers of warm shawls and clothing, or they wondered when she complained about draft from a far-away open door. The need for more warmth was also the reason for her moving to a small warm room in the infirmary in the fall of 2007.

Sister Bertholda was a very outgoing person of refreshing naturalness and openness. Participation in community life and group evenings, care for the worries of a fellow Sister were always her special concern. She enjoyed entertaining the Sisters at celebrations, acting in plays or reciting poems, and she loved to slip into male costumes and amuse us with her dialect. She took summer vacations in the mountains together with fellow Sisters who appreciated her company because of her lively and humorous character. Until shortly before her admission to the hospital she took short walks with her rollator to the greenhouse, to enjoy the people and the plants. At the parlor, she lived for and with the guests, had always an open ear for their concerns and worries and carried all in prayer to God. Even many years after the end of her parlor service, guests still asked for her or remained close to her by their greetings and visits. And she did not forget feasts of relatives and friends to whom she felt very close throughout her life. Her nickname "holde Berta" (sweet Berta) used by her family probably expresses best how lovable she was to the people. Even after her "retirement" she tried to make the residence of the employees attractive and had always a kind word to give.

Sister Bertholda nourished her faith deeply from the biblical sources. In order to know the Word of God better, she participated for many years in biblical dialogues, took time for her daily *lectio divina* and sought spiritual conversations with fellow Sisters. This helped her also, trusting in God's help, to accept difficulties, such as her departure at the end of her parlor service. Her deep union with God could also be seen at moments of conflict; she always sought reconciliation and harmony with and between the Sisters. She was a model for many in her natural piety as well as by her outgoing personality.

Already several years ago she had to cope with the diagnosis of a serious sickness of the blood, which was alleviated by repeated blood transfusions, but could not be cured. She knew that this sickness would progress and at last threaten her life. She felt this especially during the last months when her blood tests showed deterioration at ever shorter time intervals and her general condition got worse. At such times she could say: "I wish that I would arrive in good shape up there." Three weeks ago she got pneumonia which quickly weakened her. She could spend her last days, surrounded by the loving care of fellow Sisters and dear relatives, in her familiar little room in the infirmary. In the late evening of October 11 she breathed her last and returned her life into the hands of God.

We are grateful to God for all that Sister Bertholda has given us, we thank for her readiness to serve our guests, for her sense of community, her humor and her deep witness of faith. May God grant her what He promised through the Evangelist Matthew: "Come to me, blessed by my Father, take possession of the kingdom which has been destined for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger without home and you took me in ..." May she rest in peace!

Tutzing, October 12, 2009.
Prioress and Sisters of the Priory of Tutzing