



SR. IRENE ROPPERTZ OSB

22 April 1914 - 12 April 2007,

*There was Jesus standing on the shore and calling. "It is the Lord," Sr. Irene answered. Cf. John 21*

This was the gospel when we laid Sr. Irene Roppertz to her final rest with songs of resurrection and alleluja.

During the Easter Octave, 12 April 2007, very early in the morning at 2 AM, Sr Irene went to the other shore peacefully. For a long time she had longed to be there, especially since hearing and eyesight failed her more and more. During the last days she also could not speak.

Luise was born 22 April 1914 in Velmede, Diocese of Paderborn, Germany. She was the fourth child of Franz Roppertz, a gardener and his wife Regina. Three children all died before they reached the age of one year. Luise was the first one to survive and was followed by five more siblings. Four of them are still alive.

After graduation from elementary school she trained in a domestic school. 01/04/1940, during World War II she entered the Congregation of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in Olpe. 28/06/1940 she started her novitiate in St. Ottilien. The Tutzing Motherhouse was closed at that time and the novice worked as nurse in the war hospital in St Ottilien. The surgeon of her ward was very astonished one morning to see a person who looked so much like the Nurse Luise, but had a different outfit and came under the name of Sister Irene. It took some time until he understood that these two were one and the same person.

08/12/1943 was the day of her first Profession. All had to be done in secret, very early in the morning at 5 AM. At 7 AM Sr Irene was ready for her usual duty. Final Vows could be celebrated in Tutzing, after the end of the war, at Christmas time, 26 December 1944. The sisters lived in great poverty.

This beginning gives a hint of the personality of Sr Irene. She was determined to do what she had in mind and was very prayerful and of deep faith all her life.

She was sent for nurse's training and recalled with joy that she served the sick as Public Health Nurse in Olpe for 10 years, until 1955. That very year, on Christmas Eve, she arrived in Ndanda, having been sent for mission in Africa. She started as a nurse in Ndanda hospital. 1958 she was sent as a pioneer to Mtua to start a new community of our Sisters and a dispensary. There were only very few Christians that time, almost all the people were Muslims. Sr Irene set out resolutely for this task. But in 1963 she fell ill and had to be sent to Germany for treatment. After her recovery she was able to have some months of studies in UK in order to get the British recognition as a nurse.

In 1964 she spent some months in Nyangao until she was called to serve as Matron in the Ndanda Nursing School for 5 years. In 1969 Sr Irene took over another pioneer work: to start a convent and pastoral work in Lindi. Four years later she moved to Mtua again. She worked there for ten years and finally, in 1983, handed over the convent and the dispensary to the Sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians, who are still there until today.

She did not stay long in Ndanda. Her heart was longing to proclaim the Good News to the African people. Therefore she volunteered to be a pioneer for the third time: to start a new convent and dispensary in Endo, Kerio Valley in Kenya. This was in 1985. She was more than 70 years old when she resolutely set out for three years in another country.

After her return to Ndanda she took over the garden, had various duties in the house, and was subprioress for a while. It was a great joy for her to care as "celatrix" for the novices in Ndanda. She liked the young Sisters very much and was always interested in their progress. She did not like it if a sister left the house without passing by to see her. 1998 she moved to the infirmary. During the first years she could manage her life pretty well by herself. Gradually she needed more and more help. Beginning in 2007 we saw how her strength decreased. Often she needed much resolution to attend Vespers. Holy Thursday and Easter morning we brought her with her infirmary bed to the chapel for the Holy Eucharist. Once again she enjoyed the drums and all the African instruments on Easter, not being able to talk, but smiling: "Yes, it is Easter. Alleluja".

A great Benedictine and Missionary during her life, she also had a great Requiem: The bells were ringing when we transferred her body to the Abbey Church. Two bishops, the Abbot of Ndanda, 15 priests, many religious and lay people came to accompany Sr. Irene on her last journey. We are sure we now have another intercessor in heaven, so that the evangelization still needed among the Moslems in Mtwara and Lindi Diocese will continue.

R.I.P.

Prioress and Sisters of Ndanda.