



LIFE AND DEATH OF OUR DEAR

SR. IRMTRUD WAGNER, OSB

2 MAY 1928 - 7 JULY 2005

*"You teach me the path of life, unbounded joy in your presence,
At your right hand, delight forever."*

Sr. Irmtrud was born on 2nd May 1928 in Albertshofen, Germany, to her parents Johann and Maria Wagner. From what Sr. Irmtrud herself used to share about her childhood, she learned early in life to work, to help her mother take care of her two brothers and two sisters. The family endured many hardships because of world war II.

Sr. Irmtrud made her first profession as a Missionary Benedictine Sister on 11th February 1957 in Tutzing, Germany. After a few years, in 1963 she was sent as a missionary to the Philippines where she served for 16 years in different mission stations, her longest period spent in Baguio from 1970 to 1979. Baguio was in former times the retirement home for the old sisters, and Sr. Irmtrud being the youngest in this particular community cared and served the sisters with great dedication. She was much loved by the sisters and the girls she worked with. On 18th January 1980, Sr. Irmtrud together with Sr. Chantal Gerster arrived in Nairobi, Kenya. They were the pioneers with the task of starting a community for the formation of African candidates: the beginning of our community in Ruaraka.

Sr. Irmtrud took her tasks of "home affairs" in Kenya seriously, whether in Ruaraka or Eldoret. While Sr. Chantal arranged and supervised the building of the convent, Sr. Irmtrud did the lay out of the compound, planting grass, trees, shrubs, developing lawns, cleaning, cooking, in the beginning even sewing of curtains, making the house a comfortable home. With her skillfulness and having a green thumb she turned unlikely places into vegetable gardens, orchards, flower gardens, not counting the plants in pots on the verandahs and in the house! She loved nature and cared for some domestic animals. She used to talk fondly of other animals she cared for in the Philippines, like pigs, rabbits, sheep and chickens. Her experiences were linked with memories of the sisters and the team of girls she worked with in Baguio. Sr. Irmtrud loved to surprise her community with special cookies and favorite dishes on occasions. Members of the novitiate and sisters who worked with her still remember her teaching them to bake different types of bread and the delicious Christmas cookies. She served as superior of St. Scholastica's Convent in Ruaraka for 3 terms of 3 years each, and was in her first term as superior of St. Gertrud's Convent in Eldoret when she got sick.

Sr. Irmtrud's family with whom she kept close ties actively participated in her missionary life. They were interested, kept in touch, gave her moral support as well as financial support. Her priest brother, Fr. Johannes visited her when she was in the Philippines, and also came to visit her several times in Kenya. We are grateful to her relatives for what they did for Sr. Irmtrud and for us who had become her second family.

Sr. Irmtrud lived her commitment to the Lord faithfully, trusting in the God who called her. After 23 years in St. Scholastic's Convent in Ruaraka, and 2 years in St. Gertrud's Convent in Eldoret, she settled and focused her heart in Kenya as her mission land where she would live, work and die. In April 2001, Sr. Irmtrud was diagnosed to have skin cancer on her leg for which she underwent surgery in Germany. She came back in October of the same year and seemed to have recovered. But in February this year 2005, Sr. Irmtrud gradually developed a swollen leg. Despite her strong will and unusual endurance she too had finally to admit that there was a problem when the sisters recognized it. She was immediately brought to Nairobi Hospital and already there the doctors told her that the cancer had spread through her body. She was advised to go to Germany for treatment. Sr. Irmtrud had still hope of getting well and expected to come back to Kenya after treatment. Therefore, it was very hard for her when in spite of chemotherapy, her condition got worse and she could no longer return to Kenya. In May 2005, when our two Kenyan sisters, Sr. Benedicta and Sr. Emily visited her, she sadly told them that she had hoped to come back to Kenya with them. At that time she was still able to move by herself, though weak, yet aware of the seriousness of her illness. In June she became weaker and weaker, till the Lord took her to himself on 7th July 2005. We are very grateful to our sisters in Tutzing and in House St. Benedict who cared for Sr. Irmtrud, kept us informed of her situation and took care of her funeral.

Thank you, dear Sr. Irmtrud, for who you have been in our midst. Thank you for all your dedicated service done quietly, done in the background, done with commitment and constancy. The Lord whom you served faithfully through our communities, in all the peoples and places you were sent, now wants to show himself to you face to face, to give you the fullness of life and joy in his presence.

May you enjoy the reward of his Kingdom and pray for us, too.

R.I.P.

Prioress and Sisters of Nairobi Priory
Karen, 15th September 2005