

# WALK IN LOVE

LIFE OF  
**MOTHER FRANCES STREITEL**

**Sister M. Carmeline Koller, SSM**

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**MOTHER MARY FRANCES OF THE CROSS STREITEL**  
*Foundress of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother*

A native of Bavaria, Amalia Streitl was born February 13, 1844. She began her religious life as a Franciscan Sister of Maria Stern and then entered a convent of contemplative Carmelite nuns. After leaving this convent, she went to Rome in 1883 at the invitation of Father John Baptist Jordan (Francis Mary of the Cross) who was founding a Society of Catholic Teachers, which eventually became the Salvatorians (S.D.S.).

Father Jordan wanted Amalia Streitl (who took the name of Mother Mary Frances of the Cross) to be the superior of the female branch of the Society. However, her views of the religious life differed from Father Jordan's; and in 1885 (September 17) the Cardinal Vicar of Rome established for Mother Streitl and her companions a separate religious congregation of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, namely the Franciscan Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. In place of Father Jordan he appointed Father George Jacquemin (d. 1920) as their spiritual director.

Father Jordan and Mother Mary of the Apostles in 1888 founded the Sisters of the

*(continued on back flap)*

### Information

Monogram on jacket of cover along the left side,  
AMATE, means ( you love.)

- Cover jacket designed by Sister M. Patrick Flanigan, S.S.M.

### Corrections (in cover jacket)

Par. 1, line 2: Birth date is November 24  
(not February 13)

- Par. 5. : deposed from the office of  
superior general by the Cardinal  
Vicar of Rome (not by  
Father Jacquemin)

- Par. 6, line 1: In 1937 (not 1911) the Diocesan  
Process of her Cause . . . .

- Par. 7, first sentence: Brazil was omitted.

- par. 7, line 8: "Tulsa, with total membership  
in the U.S. about 360."

(Number changed and addition  
made to indicate that the number  
is for the U.S.)



# **WALK IN LOVE**

**Mother Mary Frances Streitl  
Foundress of the  
Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother**

**ARCHIVIO GENERALE SSM  
ASSM/R**



# **WALK IN LOVE**

Mother Mary Frances Streit  
Foundress of the  
Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother

by

Sister M. Carmeline Koller

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# Foreword

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"Walk in Love," the biography of Mother Mary Frances Streitel, is filled with amazing detail, rich documentation, and painstaking research. The "human condition" of Mother Frances, as well as her growth in grace, is precisely portrayed.

The growth of a religious order (in this case, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother) is often marked more by a spiral staircase approach than by a straight ladder ascent on the road to full maturity. Along the way there are detours and even diversions, but through them all there remain constant the strong will and the gospel simplicity of Mother Frances. For her, difficulties and even defeats are simply "the left hand of God" calling for greater dedication and effort.

Mother Frances is challenged with many setbacks in life, and perhaps the greatest of these is the trial of being told she must step down as Mother General near the end of her life. She accepts it gracefully, even to the point of assuming the humble tasks of a domestic in her own convent. Her simplicity and trust are tried and proven true — she rejects any trace of bitterness and maintains an appealing cheerfulness.

Her life in Christ, begun at her baptism with her godparents speaking for her, "I do," is fulfilled at the moment of her death when she speaks strongly for herself and wholeheartedly accepts the divine Lover's invitation to receive His eternal love: "I do!"

*Fr. Guy Gurath  
Radio-Tv Production  
Archdiocese of Milwaukee*



# Introduction

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When, in the course of human history there is a need for religious renewal and revival, God inspires certain men and women, who by their charism breathe new life into the Church, inebriating its members with fresh zeal for the glory of God and the sanctification and salvation of souls. At times this occurs in a spectacular manner, as with St. Paul, St. Ignatius, St. Teresa of Avila, or Pope John XXIII. At other times it happens quite unobtrusively, as leaven permeates dough, or the sun's rays stir to life the latent buds.

One of these unobtrusive people was a woman, Amalia Streitel, who later became Mother Mary Frances of the Cross, foundress of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. Her special charism was the fusion of the active with the contemplative life in the Franciscan ideal of living the Gospel. However simple and unassuming this may seem, her life was marked by special graces of a mystical nature, leading her along steep and unexpected paths, even to the founding of a new religious congregation, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. In the words of Vatican II, there is special need for a re-awakening of the religious concept of an active, apostolic life combined with a deep spirit of prayer and contemplation. *Perfectae Caritatis*<sup>1</sup> admonishes all in the religious state: "As they seek God before all things and only Him, the members of each community should combine contemplation with apostolic love"; and "in every circumstance they aim to develop a life hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3).<sup>2</sup>

It is right and fitting, therefore, that in our day, the post-Vatican II era, we recall to mind the graced and dedicated woman who, a century ago, so aptly lived and taught us what Vatican II exhorts us to do — combine the apostolic life with deep interior prayer and contemplation. This woman was Amalia Streitel, Mother Mary Frances of the Cross.



# Acknowledgments

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Thanks and appreciation to:

The Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother in Rome and the Provincial House in Milwaukee, as well as to Father Willibald Ulrich, S.D.S., and Father Alfred Schneble, S.D.S., for source material received from them and from the generalate archives of the Society of the Divine Savior.

Father Guy Gurath, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, for his critical evaluation of and foreword to the book; to Father Alexis Luzi, O.F.M.Cap., for translations from the Latin; and to Mr. David Sauer for his comprehensive review of the manuscript.

I value most highly the encouragement and assistance of the members of my own Community, especially of Sister M. Theophile Venne for her assistance in assembling and translating resource material, for the editing and final typing of the manuscript. Without her help this book could not have been written.

*Sister M. Carmeline Koller, SSM  
Mother of Sorrows Convent  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*



# Declaration

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In complete conformity with the decree of Urban VIII, the writer hereby declares that everything said in this book regarding the miraculous and such like manifestations is submitted without reserve to the judgment of the Church. The expressions such as "holy" or "saint," insofar as they are applied to the subject of this writing, are not in any way intended to anticipate the judgment of the Holy Apostolic See.





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*Sister M. Coletta Eberth and pupils, Aleppo, Kansas, in the 1890's*

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*Shrine of Our Lady of the Cliffs, Castel S. Elia*  
*Bishop Bernard Doebbing, O.F.M., Diocese of Nepi and Sutri*  
*Room in which Mother Frances died*  
*Basilica of St. Elias, Castel San Elia, Italy*  
*First grave of Mother Frances near the Basilica of St. Elias*  
*Final resting place of Mother Frances, Sisters' chapel, Castel S. Elia*



# Walk in Love

Eph. 5-2



*"Be you therefore imitators of  
God as his most dear children,  
and walk in love, as Christ also  
loved us, and delivered himself  
up for us, an offering and a  
pleasing sacrifice to God, to  
ascend in pleasing fragrance."*

*(Eph 5:2)*







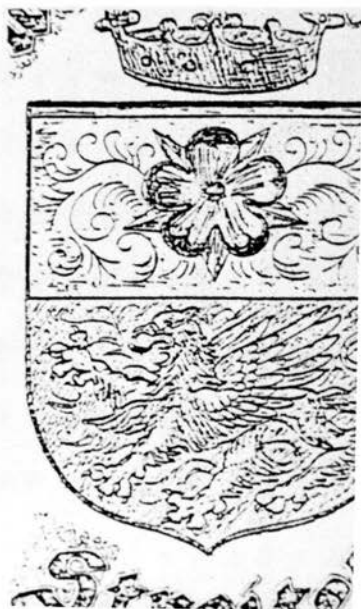
Mother Frances Streitel, foundress of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.



Adam and Frances Hörhammer Streitel, parents of Mother Frances.

Birthplace of Mother Frances. In the corner room on the second floor (at the left), she was born and baptized on November 24, 1844.

Family coat of arms received (by Streit family) from Emperor Rudolph in 1592: Crown, red rose on gold, gold griffin (lion-eagle) on red.





First Communion of Mother Frances

19 April 1857  
 Mutter Frances' First Communion  
 am 19. April 1857. Pastor Th. Endres.  
 1857. Pastor Th. Endres.

Mother Frances' First Communion certificate, signed by the pastor, Th. Endres, April 19, 1857.



St. Kilian's Church, Mellrichstadt, Bavaria, the parish church of the Streit-el family.

Family picture taken February 13, 1894 (golden wedding anniversary of parents, not in picture). Left to right: Adam Jr., Hedwig, Mother Frances, Herman, his wife Caroline, and their sons Oscar (seated) and Herman.





Mellrichstadt administration building, where Adam Streitel was assistant provincial judge, 1844-1857, and district supervisor, 1862-1875.

St. Lawrence Chapel, across the street from the Mellrichstadt administration building.





statue of the Sorrowful Mother on  
the main altar of St. Lawrence Chapel  
in Mellrichstadt.



Pietà in the nave of St. Lawrence  
Chapel, Mellrichstadt.

The town of Weyhers, where Adam Streitel served as provincial judge, 1857-1862, and Amalia attended the *Volkschule*, 1857-1860. The family lived in the courthouse, now  
Brother Conrad Home, a home for elderly ladies.





Amalia Frances Rose Streitel, before her entrance into the convent.



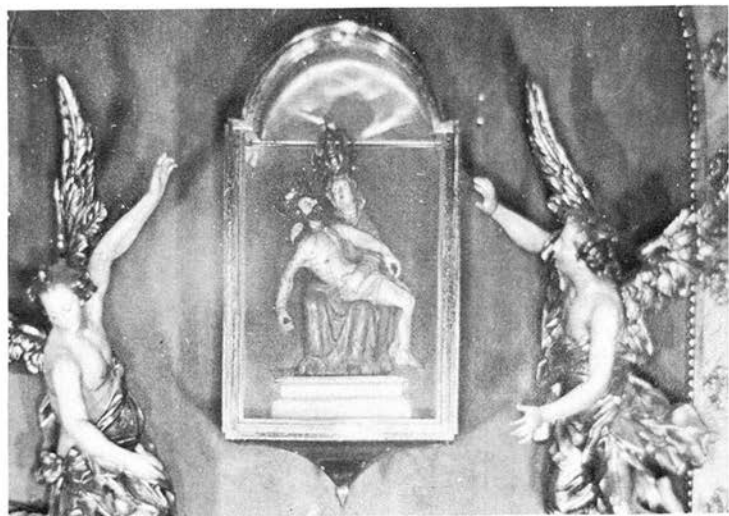
Amalia as Sister M. Angela of the Franciscan Sisters of *Maria Stern*.



St. Elizabeth's Home for Orphans, Würzburg. Sister Angela (Mother Frances) was superior here 1872-1880.

the *Käppele* (Little Chapel) in Würzburg, where Mother Frances often prayed and where a saintly Capuchin Father urged her to bring new life into the Order of St. Francis.





The seventeenth-century miraculous image of the Sorrowful Mother in the *Käppele*, Würzburg.

Former convent of Himmelspforten, Würzburg, now a diocesan retreat house. (building at left)



Bell tower of the Carmelite convent of Himmelspforten.

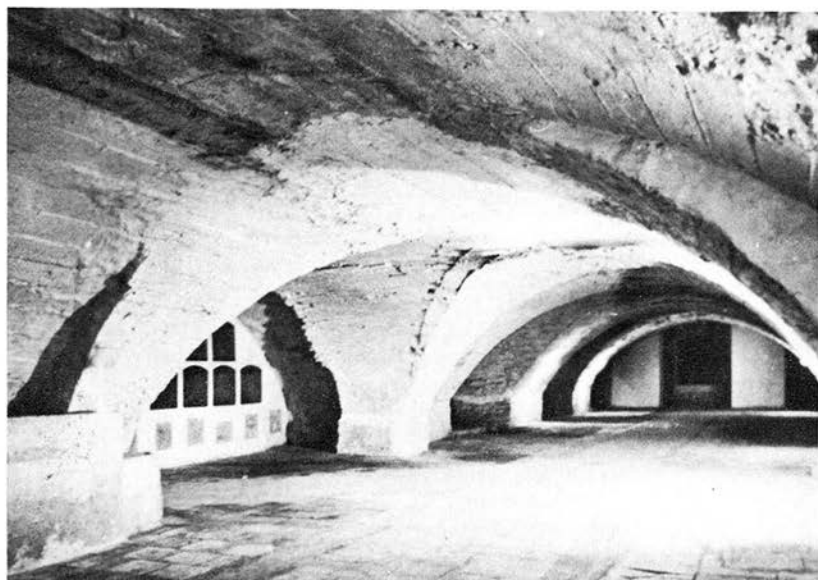






Himmelspforten as seen from the Main River.

Crypt of the convent of Himmelspforten. While praying here for the dead, Sister Petra (Mother Frances) decided to inform the prioress of her intention to leave the Carmel.





Pietà at the entrance of St. Peter's Basilica.

St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City.





Father Francis Jordan, founder of the Society of the Divine Savior (Salvatorians).

Borgo Nuovo 151, Rome, first residence of the Sisters, 1883-1884.



Via del Falco 18, Rome, second residence of the Sisters, 1884-1885.



Jesus, Maria, Josef, Franziskus u. Clara!

Begehrte der allerschönsten Jungfräulichkeit,  
der allerseligsten Jungfrau Maria, der  
glänzendsten seligen Josef, der sanftmüthigsten  
Lieber Franziskus und der so theueren  
Clara, sowie aller Engel und seligen Gele-  
ber, Gehorsam, Demuth, Keuschheit  
mit lauter und geläutertem Herzen und  
ganzem Willen zu befolgen, wie ich  
ganz und gar zu sein will.

Johannes Franziskus vom Kreuz  
als geweihter Mann der tugendlichen Lebensweise  
mit dem heiligen Kreuzzeichen, einem  
eigenen Willen, wie zu befolgen, als der  
Willen Gottes, der seinen Willen haben wird,  
wird und immer sein wird.

Ergebenheit und  
M. Franziskus vom Kreuz  
Rom d. 18. März 1883 J. C. J.



Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi, Vicar of the Bishop of Rome, Pope Leo XIII.



Msgr. George Jacquemin, spiritual director of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, 1885-1920; temporal administrator of the community, 1886-1898. He is shown in his 33rd year, holding the 1885 Constitutions.

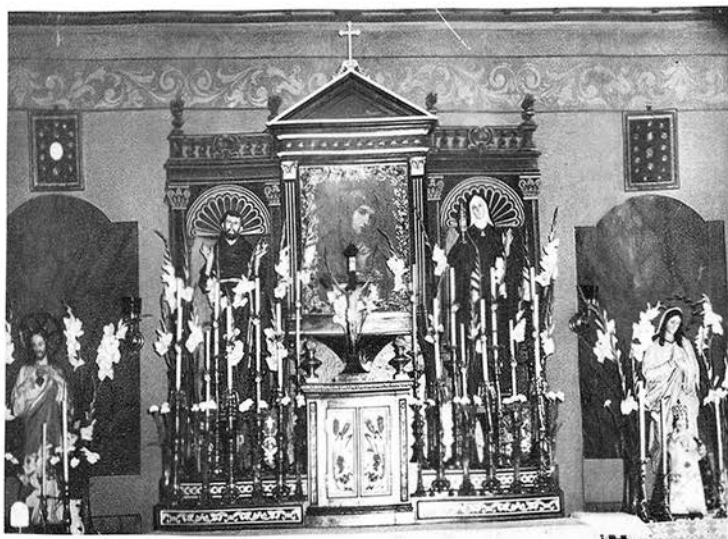


Reproduction of the oil painting of the Sorrowful Mother, selected by the community as their special image of their patroness.



Borgo Santo Spirito, No. 41, first motherhouse of the community; since 1925, a pilgrim home in Rome, close to St. Peter's.

Chapel in the pilgrim home, formerly the motherhouse.







First motherhouse, the house at the left of the stairway. The one at the right was rented in 1894, purchased in 1900 and served as the novitiate quarters, 1894-1914, the beginning of World War I.

Sister M. Scholastica Demer, first candidate admitted to the new foundation in Rome.



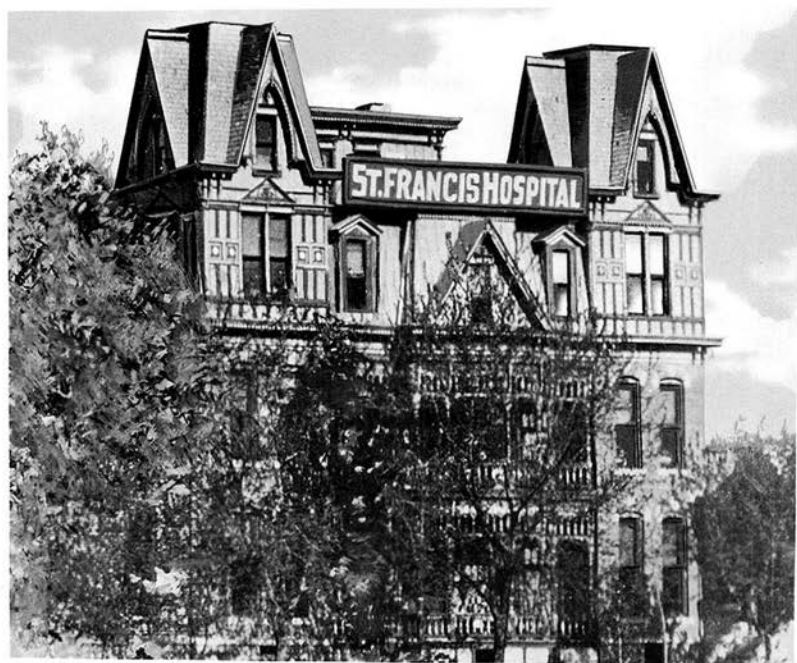
Sister M. Joachim Hornung, companion of Sister M. Scholastica in collecting alms in America, 1888-1889.





Bishop John Joseph  
Hennessy, of the  
Diocese of Wichita,  
1888-1920.

St. Francis Hospital, Wichita, Kansas, when taken over by the Sisters of  
the Sorrowful Mother in 1889.





Air view of St. Francis Hospital, Wichita, Kansas, 1978.

View of the 1978 addition to St. Francis Hospital, Wichita.





Sister M. Coletta Eberth and school children, St. Mary's School, Aleppo, Kansas, in the 1890's.

Father Joseph Joch, counselor and chaplain of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother for many years between 1892 and his death in 1944.



Mother M. Johanna Ankenbrand, successor to Mother Frances, superior general of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother from 1896 to 1931.





Temporary hospital in Marshfield, Wisconsin, 1890, on North Central Avenue, near St. John's Church.

St. Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield, Wisconsin, as it looked in July, 1891.



Air view of St. Joseph's Hospital and Marshfield Clinic, 1980.





Temporary hospital,  
Oshkosh, Wisconsin,  
1891-1895.

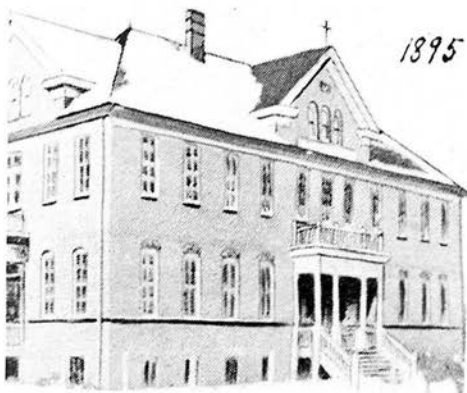


St. Mary's Hospital,  
Oshkosh, Wisconsin,  
1895.

Sisters' Convent,  
Vienna, Austria,  
1894.



Rhineland  
Hospital, taken  
over by Sisters  
of the Sorrowful  
Mother, 1893.



1895

St. Mary's  
Hospital,  
Rhineland,  
Wisconsin,  
1895.

St. Mary's Hospital, Rhineland, Wisconsin, 1980.





Temporary  
Hospital,  
Tomahawk,  
Wisconsin,  
1893.

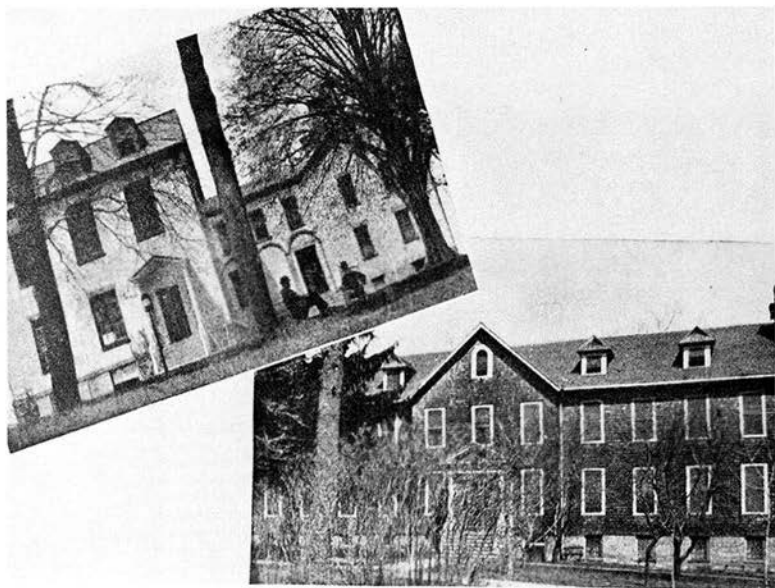
Sacred Heart  
Hospital,  
Tomahawk,  
Wisconsin,  
1894.



Sacred Heart Hospital, Tomahawk, Wisconsin, 1980.







St. Francis Sanitarium, Denville, New Jersey: Left: the Glover building and small additions, 1895; right: frame building, 1896.

St. Francis Health Resort, Denville, New Jersey, 1980.



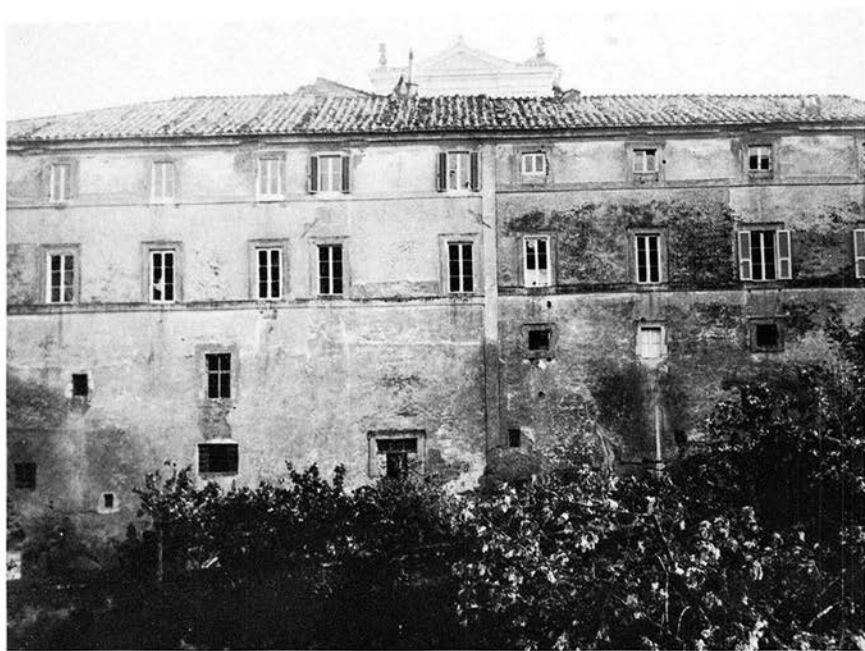


Shrine of Our Lady of the Cliffs,  
Castel S. Elia, Italy.



Bishop Bernard Doebbing, O.F.M.,  
Diocese of Nepi and Sutri, Italy.

Castel San Elia, Italy, the convent where Mother Frances spent her last years.





Basilica of St. Elias, Castel San Elia, Italy.

The room in which Mother Frances died.





First grave of  
Mother Frances,  
near the Basilica  
of St. Elias.

Final  
resting place  
of Mother Frances,  
Sisters' Chapel,  
Castel San Elia,  
Italy.



# CHAPTER 1



## **Childhood and Youth**



## “WHAT WILL THIS CHILD BECOME?”

*“What will this child  
become, for indeed, the  
hand of the Lord is upon  
him” (Luke 1:66).*

---

It was a cold, gray day in November; thick layers of cloud enveloped the earth, hiding the dome of the sky, and there was a hint of snow in the air. In the living room of a picturesque, gabled house the Sacrament of Baptism was being administered, according to the custom of the time, to a newborn child by the local pastor. The exorcisms were spoken and the anointings completed. The cooling waters of baptism were being poured over the head of the infant, and the solemn stillness of the room was broken by the sound of the sacred words, “Amalia Frances Rose, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” As though heaven and earth were rejoicing over this new child of grace, a sudden burst of bright late afternoon sunlight lit up the room, illuminating the gold-rimmed pictures on the wall, and casting a bright halo about the head of the infant. All who were in the room were filled with wonder, and each one mutely questioned the meaning of the incident; only the pastor expressed it, quoting the words of Sacred Scripture concerning St. John the Baptist: “What will this child become?” (Luke 1:66)<sup>1</sup>

Who was this child? She was the first child, named Amalia, born to Adam Streitel and Frances Hörhammer, who had been united in sacred matrimony on February 13, 1844, in Mellrichstadt, Bavaria. Mellrichstadt is a charming town, having a population of about five thousand, with neat homes and picturesque, partially ruined ramparts, which were at one time a necessary protective barrier. Lying in the foothills of the Rhön mountains and the Thuringian forest, on the border of Franconia and Thuringia, it

was at one time the site of pagan sacrifices and feastings, but Christianity made rapid inroads upon this pagan cult, as is shown by documents dating as far back as 1822.

At the time of his marriage, Adam Streitel was thirty-six years old, an assistant judge of the provincial court; his bride, Frances Hörhammer, was twenty-seven, the daughter of the owner of a brewery in Ingolstadt. The Streitel family traces its lineage from the upper Palatinate, back to 1660, following the close of the Thirty Years' War. Their coat-of-arms originally designated them as fighters, *Streit*; a later one is labeled *Streitel*.

Although forestry had been the occupation of the Streitel family through five preceding generations, Adam completed his classical and legal studies in Munich and chose the career of government official. He entered upon his office in Mellrichstadt in 1844, and administered it for thirteen years. He then served as provincial judge in Weyhers for five years, and thereafter became district supervisor in Mellrichstadt, holding that office for eleven years and then relinquishing it because he conscientiously objected to pressure in religious matters.<sup>2</sup> His objections stemmed from an 1803 enactment of the Imperial Delegation of Germany which caused ecclesiastical principalities and church property to be seized and given to secular princes. More than three million Catholics changed territorial rulers and generally found themselves living in Protestant states. The immediate result for Catholicism was a great loss of political and social influence, which could only be regained by internal renewal.<sup>3</sup>

The Bavarian Concordat of 1817 had removed the juridical confusion caused by the Act of Secularization, but the spirit of liberalism had affected great numbers, especially among the educated classes. Some Catholics had also accepted liberal views. Mr. Streitel, however, being a prudent and conscientious man, felt it his duty to profess his religion publicly and refused to make any concessions in religious matters. For this reason he asked for his pension before the customary time and retired from office.

Mrs. Streitel equally complemented her husband in piety and religious fervor. Catholicity in all its aspects reigned in their home.



Prayer was of fundamental importance; at least one member of the family attended Mass each day. Feast days, especially of the Blessed Virgin Mary, were always preceded by a novena of prayer in the home. Charity was the overflow of the mother's maternal heart, manifesting itself in solicitude for the care of the sick, the poor, and the needy. She gave from her kitchen whatever was available for them, often dispensing these gifts through her young daughter, Amalia.

Love of nature and of all things good and beautiful was a family inheritance; all things reminded them of the good God who cared so lovingly for them. The children were taught to fulfill their duties conscientiously and to be tolerant and mutually loving, qualities which demanded the negation of many natural desires and impulses. A simple and austere mode of life insofar as food and clothing were concerned was insisted upon, and a firm discipline, coupled with kindness, was exercised upon all.

Into this model Christian family were born four children: Amalia, the oldest, born on November 24, 1844; Adam, the second, born in 1846; Herman, the third, in 1851; and Hedwig, the fourth, in 1853. The two sons, who entered the army, rose to high rank and lived to an advanced age, Adam dying in Munich in 1927 at the age of 81; Herman, in a military hospital in 1916 during World War I. Hedwig was educated in the *Maria Stern* Institute in Augsburg and later taught in a school conducted by the "English Ladies."<sup>4</sup> She spent her last years in Abenberg, Bavaria, with the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, the community founded by her own sister Amalia, and died there on January 22, 1931.

Amalia was an intelligent, though not exceptional child. Nature had endowed her with a strong will and wilful temper, for she was a *Streitel*, a born fighter. Her fidelity to her lofty ideals and her tenacity of purpose in realizing her desired end in later life corroborate this fact. Under the tutelage of her kind and energetic mother, Amalia learned self-control and self-discipline. Orderliness and punctuality were prime requisites, and she often had to interrupt her play when her mother requested it. Yet she never

resented this; and her love for her family and her affection for them grew as time went on. A little note of congratulation which she wrote to her father at the age of eleven gives us an insight into her love and esteem for her parents. It reads:

For a long time I have awaited this day with happiest sentiments! With ardent devotion I shall ask our dear Father in heaven today to keep you in good health, contented and happy. My whole endeavor shall be to learn as much and to conduct myself as well as I can, so that you may be well satisfied with me.<sup>5</sup>

Like other children of her social position, she was carefully trained in the manner of polite society and in developing those social graces suitable to her rank. She was not always permitted to indulge her innate desire for solitude, but was urged to appear in company and socialize when visitors came. In early childhood she was taught to perform household tasks and become skillful in needlework.

Amalia's formal education began at the age of six with the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who were in charge of the school for girls at the time. Being mentally alert, she had no difficulty in mastering subject matter, and her innate abilities were appreciated by her parents and fostered in every way. She was especially fond of the poorer children and preferred associating with them.

In religious matters, however, Amalia was a precocious child. Her natural talents, combined with suitable religious instruction and prayer at home, nurtured and accelerated her religious development, for grace builds upon nature. Mrs. Streitel well understood how to impress Christian ideals upon her children from the very dawn of their reason, both by her example and by simple instruction suited to their mental capacity. We are told that she taught Amalia at the age of two to make the Sign of the Cross and say little prayers in rhyme. Already at the age of nine the child sought to understand the meaning of Christ's words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (John 12:32).

With great care Amalia prepared for her first confession, approaching the Sacrament of Penance in a spirit of humility and penance, and leaving it with great interior joy, having been freed from the guilt of her childish faults and imperfections through the mercy of God and the merits of Christ. She was already "walking in love" (Eph. 5:2), and that which she sought to comprehend had become a reality — Christ had drawn her to Himself. Thereafter she determined to avoid every fault she had heretofore committed and to keep closer vigilance over her senses lest she fall again, in order to prove her love for her Savior and repay His sacrifice with her own small gift of love. Moreover, she was at that time already drawn by the love of Christ to share in His sufferings by putting small pieces of wood into her bed, so that by disturbing her night's rest she might do penance, mindful of the words of St. Paul, "In my flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ" (Col. 1:24). Her mother, however, having discovered this penitential practice, immediately discontinued it, but was deeply moved by the child's spirit of sacrifice and penance and surmised that God might have special designs in regard to her daughter. It is related that the only grief Amalia ever caused her parents was her undue fasting and non-use of cosmetics.

Having thus been closely drawn to Christ through the grace of the Sacrament of Penance, Amalia longed more and more for His coming in the Holy Eucharist, knowing that the only adequate return for love is sacrifice and intimate union. She tried to appease her yearning for Christ by the practice of making spiritual communions, but that did not satisfy her desire. At this point in the history of the Church, which antedates the Decree of February 14, 1906, of St. Pius X by some fifty years, children were not permitted to receive their First Holy Communion before the age of twelve or thirteen years; Jansenistic ideas and spirit still held sway. Only at that age were they considered mature enough to approach the sacred table and receive the Divine Mysteries and share in the Eucharistic Banquet. Amalia was therefore twelve years of age, close to thirteen, a young lady by our standards, at the time she was permitted to receive her First Holy Communion.

It was on the first Sunday after Easter, April 19, 1857, that the great day arrived. After careful preparation for over a period of several months, the First Communicants were escorted in solemn procession from the school to the church. Bands played, banners waved, children marched, and the entire parish of St. Kilian participated in the solemn, sacred event. Each child, according to custom, carried a large, flower-decorated candle in the right hand and, in the left, a rosary. The First Communicants occupied the place of honor in the festively adorned church. After the sermon they renewed their baptismal vows, renouncing Satan and his deceptive ways and reaffirming their belief in, and their allegiance to, all that the Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches. As the solemn moment of the Communion of the Mass drew near, the Communicants approached the altar in pairs and, kneeling on a decorated prie-dieu, received for the first time their Lord and Savior in the Holy Eucharist.

With floods of joy inundating her pure soul, this girl, who had already been so powerfully drawn to Christ, could indeed say, "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20), and there welled up in her a "fire that many waters cannot quench nor floods extinguish" (Cant. 8:7). Her one desire was to receive Him again and again, as often as it was permitted her, for in those days daily Communion was not granted. She carefully preserved a holy card with the signature of Father Endres, pastor, as a souvenir of this grace-filled day.

In the afternoon, all the First Communicants were received into the Corpus Christi Archconfraternity, to which all of the faithful of the diocese belonged. On the following day a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated, and at its close the children placed their candles upon the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

If devotion to the Blessed Sacrament held priority in Amalia's heart, veneration of Our Lady was its counterpart, which manifested itself so strikingly in her later life. Her first impressions were naturally received in her home, where devotion to the Mother of God was fostered by prayer, especially preceding her feasts. In her home town of Mellrichstadt we still find, at a short distance

from the parish church of St. Kilian, the St. Lawrence Chapel, which is now preserved as a memorial of earlier times. In this chapel there is a crucifixion group with the Sorrowful Mother and St. John above the main altar; in the nave of the chapel is a statue of the Pietá.

In another part of the town is the Grossenbergs Chapel, dating from 1494 and enriched by Pope Alexander VI with various privileges. A painting of the Crucified One with Mary beneath the cross, flanked by images in relief of the other sorrows of Mary, forms the altar frontispiece; to the rear of the chapel there is another small chapel, disclosing another statue of the Pietá.

Devotion to the Mother of Sorrows must have been traditional in this town, dating from medieval times and expressed in Baroque style and figures. It was but natural that these representations, coupled with devotion to Our Blessed Lady, should have a profound effect upon Amalia's spiritual life, that it should help mold the pattern and give direction to the course which her later life would take.

It was not long before Amalia had to leave this haven of grace and beautiful memories, for her father was promoted to the position of provincial judge in Weyhers and the family necessarily had to move there. She was, however, compensated for this move by soon receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

She was determined at all costs to keep herself unspotted from the pollution of a sinful world, and by following the path of love which she had already begun to walk to "spread and defend the faith by word and deed as a true witness of Christ."<sup>6</sup>

Amalia attended the *Volksschule* in Weyhers from 1857 to 1860. The family had their private living quarters in the courthouse in which Mr. Streitel was provincial judge. This building, which is now the Brother Conrad Home, was used to house refugees after World War II, in 1946. It was purchased and remodeled in 1962 by the District of Fulda and provides beds for thirty-five old ladies. The house is staffed by the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis (Schervier Sisters), who also conduct a kindergarten and do home nursing in Weyhers.

In the late summer of 1964, all the streets and roads in Weyhers were given new names. Among the name changes, the road between the church and the kindergarten was renamed "Frances Streitel Road."<sup>7</sup> Her memory is perpetuated here, not merely by the name of a street but more so by the members of the religious community who are continually aware of the fact that they are living in the house once occupied by one who, already in her youth, strove more than the ordinary for holiness of life.

After completing the local *Volksschule*, Amalia expressed her desire for higher education. Her parents, pleased with her request, chose for her the educational institution known as *Maria Stern* in Augsburg. This was a school for girls of the upper strata of society, conducted by the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, who were reputed as being capable and efficient instructors. The course of study comprised mainly liberal arts, with emphasis on languages and music. Religious formation and character training, however, were prime objectives of the school.

With her intellectual ability, Amalia easily gained recognition as a good student. She performed her scholastic tasks, however, more from a sense of duty than from competitive or vain motives. She found no real satisfaction in them, for, as she expressed it, "They are apt to foster vanity, and they are superfluous." This statement reveals how entirely she was engrossed in interior Christian life and in the demands it made upon her whole person. She did not condemn the value of higher education by any means, but the vain pursuit of it to the detriment of personal character development and the fostering of class distinction, which was a heritage from feudal society and times. Moreover, in her day, the masses received only fundamental general education required by state law, coupled with domestic and vocational training, which sufficed for most needs of ordinary living. Higher education was reserved for the privileged classes only and her sharp eye discerned the discrepancy it caused between the ordinary and the higher strata of society.

Amalia found her greatest happiness in prayer, in liturgical functions, and in the study of religion. Being somewhat reserved, she

had no intimate friends, although all respected her for her gentleness and kindness. As to gaiety and entertainment, she enjoyed being a good spectator but seldom took part. Her vacations were spent at home with her parents in Weyhers, and it was always painful for her to leave again and return to school. She spent many a homesick hour before she could again adjust to school routine.

Having completed her four-year course of study at the *Maria Stern* Institute, Amalia graduated, with honors, in 1862 and received her diploma entitling her to teach. She now returned home, which was again in Mellrichstadt, for in that year her father had become supervisor of the district administration there. The home was now in the administration building in the center of the town. The stately structure housed spacious quarters for the supervisor's family on the second and third floors, while offices occupied the first floor.

As county supervisor, her father was accountable for the administration of the whole district, namely, the courts, internal revenue, police force, municipal administration, schools, and even ecclesiastical matters insofar as this was laid down by the Concordat of 1817. He was the official executive of the laws and decrees of the royal government; under his jurisdiction were public safety, communications, and the protection of museums of art and antiquity.

Contrary to what our expectations would be of a graduate with a teacher's certificate, Amalia returned to a life of quiet seclusion in her home. Her mother patiently tried to initiate her into the secrets of the culinary arts and good housekeeping, with an eye to making her an efficient housewife in her future life. However distasteful this was to her, Amalia submitted without complaint.

She was also drawn into the vortex of society, being asked to join in family festivities and accept invitations to social affairs. At one time, noticing how ill at ease she felt at a dance, her father allowed her to return home and no longer pressured her to attend such functions.

Underneath this seemingly quiet exterior and forced gaiety,

however, there was raging a fierce battle. Her conflict was not with herself, but with the members of her family. She knew she had a vocation to religious life; of that she was sure. Moreover, there was also the haunting attraction to an Order with a more severe religious discipline than that demanded or practiced by the Sisters she had previously known and been associated with during her school days at *Maria Stern*, for already in her childhood she had felt the urge of performing penitential practices.

The whole issue revolved about her parents, pious though they were, particularly about her father. She knew he would not consent to her entrance into the convent, especially of an older Order of a more severe rule. Being in the upper strata of society and belonging to the class of government officials, her parents were affected by the prejudices of their state against religious life and were more inclined to see Amalia happily married than secluded in a convent. On the whole, they, more so her father, were ill disposed toward her desire to enter religious life, not so much because of an aversion for it, but because they believed it to be merely her adolescent religious fervor, affected by her recent contact with the personnel of the school which she had attended. Her father, God-fearing man that he was, knew that he was not allowed to thwart the designs of God in regard to his daughter. Nevertheless, he felt it his duty to discourage her youthful enthusiasm, being convinced that such religious ardor is not yet a religious vocation.

Amalia, though of age and no longer legally subject to her parents, did not wish to pain them by going contrary to their expressed wishes. With her deep reverence for her parents and her filial obedience toward them, she humbly submitted to her father's authority as to the will of God. Although this was a severe trial for her, to be endured for four years, it strengthened and solidified her vocation and called forth those character traits which were so pronounced in later years — her fortitude in the midst of trials, her tenacity of purpose to her lofty ideals, and her great love of God and man even in the midst of dichotomy and contradiction. In this present trial she found consolation and support in prayer



and in the reception of the sacraments. She put all her trust in God, knowing that He, in His own good time, would solve her problem and that the struggle would somehow come to a head. And it did!



## CHAPTER 2



# **Vocation to the Religious Life**



"FOR IT IS GOOD TO HIDE THE  
SECRET OF THE KING" (Tob 12:7)

*"Be imitators of God  
as his most dear  
children" (Eph 5:1).*

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A grand reception had been planned in the Streitel home; everything was ready. Glittering silver sparkled on a white damask, and a profusion of flowers adorned the festive dining table. Mrs. Streitel bustled around nervously, putting a final finishing touch to the already perfect setting. Amalia was urged to dress for the occasion by donning her beautiful white ball gown and wearing her sparkling jewels. The honored guest was to be a law student, a possible suitor for Amalia's hand. The evening wore on, and the guest arrived. But where was Amalia? A futile search of the house ended in an embarrassing situation; Amalia simply could not be found. Late at night someone suggested a search of the attic, and there, among the rafters, in her finery, sat Amalia. In her hectic frenzy she had somehow climbed the ladder leading to the attic and hid in a corner. God had helped her end her dilemma, for her father now realized that the situation was serious, and he would not coerce his daughter contrary to God's will. He gave his consent to her entrance into a convent, realizing that *his ways were not God's ways*.

Knowing that they could no longer stand in the way of their daughter's choice of vocation, her parents, cognizant of her inclination to austerity and solitude, demanded from her the promise not to enter an Order of severe discipline or strict enclosure, or dedicate herself to the care of the sick. The nursing profession had not yet gained prominence and was looked upon as having less dignity than the teaching profession. It was also largely confined to home nursing, lacking the facilities and expertise of our day.

Amalia realized that at long last, after four years of waiting, she was free to answer the call which came from God — that call which she herself tells us she had received *in a special manner at the age of seventeen*,<sup>1</sup> which must have been during her school days at *Maria Stern* Institute. She records in a notebook: "Aug. 1862 — Call to the convent." She never divulged the nature of this special call, keeping in mind the words of the angel to Tobias, "For it is good to hide the secret of a king" (Tob. 12:7). An experience such as this cannot be put into human words; whoever has experienced a touch of God knows with certainty what it is He asks. She realized that she was now free to answer the call of God, but not in the manner in which He asked it of her.

Her parents would have wished her to join the School Sisters of Notre Dame, but with the secret hope that later on she might be employed in the care of the sick, Amalia asked to be admitted into the convent of *Maria Stern* at Augsburg, Germany, a congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis, the saint to whom she was especially attracted. She was already acquainted with the Sisters of this congregation from her school days and respected their manner of life, in which reigned religious discipline, piety, and apostolic activity. After her entry in the spring of 1866 as a postulant, she was asked to continue her study of French and music, which she had sadly neglected while at home. Her request to study nursing, however, was declined by a determined "No" from the superior, for she knew the candidate's ability in school work and administration. Amalia openly admitted that this was not agreeable to her because of her love of simplicity, as she herself said.<sup>2</sup> Again we must revert to the ideas current in those days. Study of languages, music and art were the prerogative of the elite of society and not the domain of the common person. Amalia, in her long hours of thought and meditation during her four years of waiting, had learned from Christ, who, when coming into this world, "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," to imitate Him in humility and lowliness of being.

Amalia's time of postulancy was a time of great suffering. She herself wrote, "God knows what I suffered in the first three

months.”<sup>3</sup> Having to live in a situation altogether opposed to her inclinations was a great trial, and only her resolute will aided her in persevering in her vocation, for she did not feel that this was the place God had destined for her. In addition, she was very homesick. She clearly understood that in *Maria Stern* she could not lead the austere religious life to which God was calling her. But as she had waited several years for the help of God in trying to realize her destination, so now she felt confident He would again come to her aid. Again, as always, prayer was her greatest support and consolation. The one and only person to whom she confided her interior struggles was Monsignor Joseph Franz Allioli, rector of the Cathedral of Augsburg and confessor to the Sisters of *Maria Stern*. Being a learned as well as an experienced spiritual director, he counseled her to receive the habit.

Amalia was received into the Congregation of the Sisters of *Maria Stern* on October 17, 1866, and was given the name “Sister M. Angela.” Her reception into the novitiate, however, did little to assuage the demands of her conscience, which kept telling her, “Your vocation is to a strict Order.” Monsignor Allioli permitted her as severe a penitential discipline as was secretly possible, but this did not alleviate the suffering caused by the demands of her conscience.

Having completed her novitiate, which she made at the mature age of twenty-three, Sister Angela made her religious profession as a Sister of *Maria Stern* on June 8, 1868. Since she was already a certified teacher and had done advanced study during her period of postulancy, she was sent, after her first profession of vows, to Nördlingen to teach in the local school staffed by her community. She approached her task with great religious zeal and fervor in imitation of Christ, hoping to serve God in the work entrusted to her and in obedience to her religious superior. But God was beginning to lead her, step by step, to the destination He had prepared for her.

Scarcely three years had elapsed when, on October 2, 1871, she was appointed as local superior of the new mission of Altomünster in the Archdiocese of Munich. Her assignment comprised

the duties of local superior of the Sisters residing there, the administration of a girls' school for languages and needlework, and teaching music in a private studio. Being of an energetic nature and imbued with the spirit of sacrifice, she deemed it her duty to develop correct habits and fundamental principles in her pupils, in order to bring out the best in them and make them useful members of society. Her good intentions, however, did not always meet with approval, as all educators well know. One young student complained of her method of instruction in playing the zither, that her teacher had pressed her finger so hard on the string that "it hurt!"<sup>4</sup> At another time, this same student complained of the fact that she had been detained after school as a punishment and not released on time, although it was probably only inadvertence on Sister Angela's part. Instances such as these, however, show only one side of the coin. In later life this student retained good impressions and happy memories of her association with her teacher, Sister Angela. She described her as very devout and pious, qualities which the sharp eye of a child easily discerned.<sup>5</sup>

At the time of her appointment as local superior of Altomünster, at the age of twenty-seven, her main concern, because of her previous religious training and experience, was her own spiritual advancement and that of her fellow religious and pupils. The superior general of her community, Mother Salesia Ellersdorfer, commended Sister Angela, in a letter to Mrs. Streitell, for her virtuous life, especially her obedience and courage in accepting the position of authority, even when it cost her tears, and her practical knowledge of household management.

In view of these excellent qualities, much to her consternation, she was selected for a much larger sphere of activity, that of superior of St. Elizabeth's Home for Orphans in Würzburg. This took place May 13, 1872, only seven months after her appointment as local superior of Altomünster. In this institution there was great variation in the number of residents, both Sisters and children usually numbering between thirty and forty. For a young superior with hardly a year of experience, this presented a real challenge. But Sister Angela was equal to the task. She tried in



every way, and with the greatest effort, to foster a good spirit among the Sisters and the orphans. But again her views and her zeal were misconstrued. Most probably because of this, she relinquished her initial zeal and became somewhat lukewarm. She wrote of this in a report to the Bishop of Augsburg:

In the first years I was a zealous religious, guided by strict principles, but then I became more lax and adapted myself to those who did not follow the rule and regulations of the Order exactly. Thereby many an inordinate inclination gained ascendancy and I let myself be ruled by them until it pleased God to let me fall into a mortal illness about four years ago.<sup>6</sup>

What this illness was, we do not know. The only reference we have is in a letter to Father Jordan, July 21, 1883, in which she tells him she had to lie on a seaweed mattress for five weeks because of a serious illness which brought her close to death. She continues in her letter to the bishop: "Then I recognized my erring ways and begged God to spare my life. I fought a fierce battle with my self-love, with my perverse inclinations and my moods."

As a fervent Franciscan in her early religious life, she had most certainly tried to the best of her ability to *imitate Christ*, in an uncompromising *living of the gospel*. Her concept of Franciscanism and living in the spirit of the poverello of Assisi meant no less to her than the sweeping out of all superfluities and the pruning away of attachment to material things in order to lead an austere and mortified life in the spirit of the gospel. She does not expressly state them, but whatever may have been the faults and transgressions Sister Angela saw in herself, she had the courage to face them and amend her life. She writes farther on: "A good confession to a Capuchin Father brought me much light, and after some time God led me through a torrent of suffering."

After her recovery, some of the Sisters, seeing that she had reverted to her former exemplary life, again willingly followed her in her religious zeal. Yet it was just this change which caused her to be denounced in the motherhouse in Augsburg as being an

innovator and exceeding the bounds of her authority. Not all were prepared to make concessions; some preferred to live as they had hitherto done, in comfort and convenience, with perhaps a bit of luxury. The accusations and slanders were taken at face value and believed in the motherhouse; when chided for them, she accepted everything humbly and quietly, without any attempt at self-defense. Of this period of her life she writes:

My associates, seeing that I earnestly sought to do better, adhered to me and my principles, but God permitted that from the motherhouse great sufferings should befall me.

I was given permission to act freely in certain instances, and when I made use of the permission and it did not turn out as desired, and when slander was added to this, sharp rebukes and insinuations were leveled against me. And yet, the thought of leaving the convent never occurred to me; I could make reparation for my sins and was firmly convinced thereby that God wanted to prepare me for a task that was as yet undisclosed to me.<sup>7</sup>

Sister Angela had deviated from the path of love for a short time, but God in His mercy had called her back, through tribulation and suffering, to follow Him once more in childlike simplicity and love.

Letters to her superior general, Mother Salesia Ellersdorfer, which Sister Angela wrote in 1879, give us a good insight into different facets of her character. Her sincere effort to improve spiritually is clearly depicted in her letter of March 5 of that year:

Since I have learned to pray again like a child, I am at peace with myself and with my fellow Sisters. . . . For three fourths of a year, God be praised, nothing has happened which disturbed charity, since I resolutely bade farewell to my moods and caprices, working more by example than by word. There is always much to do yet to conquer depraved nature, dear Venerable Mother, but thanks to the grace of God, I finally realize that it is I who fail most often and have the most to improve.

Besides this candid admission of her faults and a serious effort

to advance in holiness of life, these letters also reveal very human traits of sincere devotedness and attachment to her superior general, even to asking in one of them, on May 7, "Why are you so hostile toward me, robbing me of all hope of your maternal love?" At an earlier date, March 5, she wrote, "Do not let me wait so long for a loving letter as the last time, for after God, I have only you as one close to me." In a still earlier letter she had asked Mother Salesia for permission to go to see her for a few days, adding, "You have no idea what joy a trip to you would bring me."

Her filial sense of obedience prompted her always to present her views candidly and ask the required permission for anything she deemed necessary or desirable, such as a trip on Sister Mathilde's name day, March 14, to go with that Sister to visit her mother. On July 9 she again asked to go with her to Prozelten for a few weeks, saying, "As I do not go anywhere except to church, I would be grateful to breathe country air for a few weeks."

No less genuine was her filial love and affection toward her parents. At one time, when asked if she knew of a suitable family to lodge temporarily in St. Elizabeth's Home, she wrote Mother Salesia about her desire to bring her mother there, assuring her at the same time that she would not mention this to her parents nor request it until she knew her wish in regard to it. Soon after, she added in another letter that she was very happy and that if her parents would not move there, she would say nothing to bring it about.

In that same letter, dated January 21, she wrote that the Rev. Assistant, Father Braun, wished her to visit an institute in Augsburg for informational purposes, but that she had heard of a similar newly erected institute in Bamberg, directed by the English Ladies. She therefore asked Mother Salesia, "Shall I go to my parents for a few days and be introduced to the Ladies by my sister?"

On July 8 she wrote, "The directress is going to the mineral springs in Kissingen. If I knew she would not return in three

weeks, I would ask to have my mother come, who has not been here for almost three years."

These letters of 1879 also indicate that Sister Angela was an administrator of exceptional ability in her understanding of the limitations and capacities of the Sisters and the personnel working with her. She reminded Mother Salesia that in the new Marian Institute about to open, the Sister for the kitchen would be required to have an understanding of the garden and be a good seamstress as well; that many young people would be needed to carry the work load of cleaning and putting things in order in the beginning. Concerning a candidate who did not appear acceptable to the directress, she suggested it would be better for her to be transferred elsewhere, to a place where she would have to work hard.

She repeatedly expressed the desire, if obedience called her to the new Marian Institute, to have Sister Petra assigned there also, since with God's help she had learned to understand this Sister and both had worked together, mutually assisting one another for the reason that they were able to supplement each other in certain occupational tasks.

In regard to the possible acceptance of an orphanage which the Order was considering, she told the mother general not to be anxious in respect to the terms, as the present directors had claimed very good salaries and the government had willingly paid them. As to additional income for the orphanage, derived from the orphan children's participation in wealthy funerals, she felt that religious could justifiably continue this practice, because it was an ongoing matter and required much time.

All of the foregoing reveals Sister Angela as a woman religious, striving indeed toward great holiness of life through her consecration to God by her religious profession of vows, which profession did in no way thwart the unfolding of her human personality. In the words of Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*, "... the profession of the evangelical counsels, though entailing the renunciation of certain values which undoubtedly merit high esteem, does not

detract from a genuine development of the human person" (Chap. 6, no. 46).

The year 1879, however, was to bring with it a test of her virtue, and in her letters between January and May we see events shaping themselves into a cross for her. In Würzburg, the newly constructed Marian Institute for female domestic servants was to be opened in Kirchbuchstrasse No. 26 outside the city, in the parish of St. Peter. In January the secretary of the Marian Society, Rev. Carl Val. Schneider, as well as the Rev. Dr. V. Braun, assistant in the episcopal seminary for priests, both wrote to Mother Salesia asking for Sisters for the new Institute. Father Schneider intimated and Father Braun expressed the desire to have Sister Angela assigned as superior, and Father Michael Beckert, pastor of St. Peter's Parish, was also in favor of this. As matters progressed toward the expected opening in May, Father Beckert, assuming that Sister Angela would be assigned, wrote to her: "Prepare yourself."

Sister Angela and the Sisters had prayed much in regard to the Marian Institute, and "always only that the will of God be done." Keenly interested in the new project and quite certain that Father Beckert's message meant that she was to prepare herself for the transfer from St. Elizabeth's Home to the Marian Institute, she wrote to Mother Salesia, asking her to call her away from Würzburg and let her lodge in the servants' institute in Augsburg for about eight days "in order to arrive at some certainty and knowledge. . . . The affairs of St. Elizabeth's Home are in order. I could leave already at the end of this week." Thus she wrote on May 5.

Her next letter, however, written the following day, indicates a sudden change in the whole affair. Human elements had entered in, and as a result Father Beckert, in spite of his having requested religious for the Marian Institute, accepted a lay teacher in the Society and bade her open the Institute. The Rev. Dr. Braun agreed to let the teacher have the first floor of the Institute and live in the addition. He assured Mother Salesia in a letter of May 7 that he considered it perfectly justifiable and correct that she had

decided not to assign Sister Angela as superior. It was with sorrow that he expressed this conviction, for he felt that Sister Angela was being put to a great test. "I beg you," he wrote, "to be very good to Sister Angela, to whom we owe *many* thanks for her previous zeal; and I ask you to pour oil and wine into the wounds I have inflicted on her, without sin, however, and without malice, contrary to my feelings, in the consciousness of my duty."

What was Sister Angela's reaction to this turn of events? She wrote to Mother Salesia on May 6:

Dear Venerable Mother, this half year has taught me to withdraw interiorly and be silent. Fortunately, I have cut off all intercourse with the outside and am innocent if accused of loving to gossip. . . . I would certainly ask pardon if I had had an evil motive or had let myself be used as a plaything. Nothing of the sort. I sought to better myself in correcting my faults.

When Father Beckert learned that Sister Angela was not to be assigned as superior for the Marian Institute, he too wrote a lengthy letter to Mother Salesia, explaining what he could and attempting to turn the whole situation around again. So deeply did he regret what had been done that he could neither eat nor sleep and he begged that Sister Angela be sent to the Institute by all means. Sister Angela passed this information on to Mother Salesia on May 7 and then wrote, "Oh, how happy we were this morning, and now —. Only the express command on your part, however, can let me again take up a matter which has been made so bitter for me."

The same day, however, she wrote — and here we see grace obviously at work: "I received Sister Elizabeth's letter and I say over and over again, thanks be to God for this dispensation, thanks for every humiliation, thanks for everything!" Two days later she repeated:

Thanks and thanks again for all the humiliations. May the Lord extol me in eternity. Oh, how good the Lord is to the soul who loves Him. It will be strong in the storms of this life. . . . In spite of insomnia and lack of appetite, I am,

God be praised, well and in good spirits. Never before have I felt as I do this time the power of sufferings borne for the love of God.

The new Marian Institute was dedicated by the bishop on June 21, the feast of St. Aloysius. A month later the Rev. Dr. Braun wrote to Mother Salesia, asking her to send three Sisters as soon as possible. Sister Angela was not one of them. It was not until April, 1880, that she was suddenly transferred to the Marian Institute, when conditions there were sorely in need of betterment.

Prior to her transfer, Sister Angela was aware of the deteriorating condition of the Institute, and when the directress asked her if she would be willing to assume direction, she replied: "Yes, if obedience calls me." But immediately she added, "I shall not work there long, for God is calling me elsewhere."

Certain that with God's help Sister Angela would improve conditions in the Marian Institute, the directress petitioned for her directly at the motherhouse in Augsburg. But Sister Angela herself admits in her letter to Bishop Pancratius in 1881: "Yes, in all candor I say to Your Excellency that I invited her to do so because I was convinced they would never rest until I worked there, and because it was the will of God." Nevertheless, when she heard that a new superior had been appointed for the Institute, she withdrew her offer and after a few days asked the directress to refrain from requesting her as superior. Early the next morning she went to the miraculous picture of the Sorrowful Mother in the Kppele in Wrzburg, to give thanks for the favor of not having to assume direction of the Marian Institute. On the way home she said repeatedly to her companion, "I am so happy!" Who would not have been happy to by-pass such an assignment! But alas, her joy was short-lived, for the board of directors had already decided that Sister Angela should be requested as superior and had already sent a lady to the motherhouse in Augsburg for that purpose.

When Sister Angela did finally assume charge of the Marian Institute in April, 1880, the Institute for which she had prayed and suffered so much, it was to take up her cross and follow

even more closely than before in the footsteps of the Crucified. It was a larger institution than St. Elizabeth's Home, with about sixty orphan girls, who were being educated and trained in needlework and housework for Christian domestic service. The building was a plain, large, three-story one, with a chapel accessible only to the Sisters and children. At the time when Sister Angela came, the financial, domestic, and even religious conditions were in complete disarray. Her great support was St. Joseph, in whom she had complete trust and confidence, for she tells us, "Good St. Joseph, for some years my guide and father, had to obtain for me many graces from his divine foster Son at that time."<sup>8</sup>

Her efforts to bring about a reform of the conditions of the house again met with disfavor, and complaints and objections were leveled and directed against her to the motherhouse. Since she enforced a stricter observance of poverty than was their custom, the Sisters felt she had exceeded her authority. In order to detach them from superfluous things, she had on one occasion requested them to exchange cells, and in doing so, to leave behind everything except their personal linen. We can well imagine what a storm of protest this must have aroused in a house where the prevailing customs were regarded as legitimate usage and not against the vow of poverty. But for Sister Angela, the vow of poverty consisted not merely in detachment from temporal things but in the actual separation from superfluities, and she considered it her duty to make her subjects aware of it. It was so shocking to them that in later years a Sister wrote, "It was a good thing she left; she would have upset the whole Order!"<sup>9</sup> Indeed, several Sisters had left the community during the time of Sister Angela's term of office, for they could not understand nor conform to her concept of poverty. She herself loved holy poverty; as superior, she lived in a small room on the third floor, although a larger one on the first floor had been reserved for her. Reform, however, is an onerous and thankless job, and like the prophets of old, the person who is called to be a



"reformer" is labeled a visionary, an extremist, and is usually made the scapegoat for the misdemeanors of others. So it was with Sister Angela. In her letter to Bishop Pancratius in September, 1881, she continues:

. . . for in the motherhouse no one was regarded with less favor than I. . . . I came to the Institute, but what a flood of pain and suffering, of harshness and humiliation followed me. No thought was given to my defense. I was condemned without being heard. Of merciful charity there was no thought — but enough of this. God wished to prepare me for a cause! If the help of grace had not been so plentiful at that time, mind and body would have suffered ruin. The salvific power of the wounds of the Lord saved me. I had to, and with the grace of God, I was able to meet others in a cordial manner, and all this, in a house with a hundred persons of every type, with a heart steeped in sorrow.

Most Reverend Bishop, I experienced then what is meant by "standing beneath the cross with a bleeding heart." Since that time I am mightily drawn to love of the cross. My whole endeavor was bent on banishing from my heart every trace of bitterness that sought to lodge there, on praying very zealously and drawing closer than ever to the Tabernacle. My work was visibly blessed by God and thanks to divine help, after a few months, order was restored everywhere.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, God was purging her in this school of suffering and drawing her ever closer to Himself; this kindled in her the desire to live ever more and more according to the original austerity of St. Francis. She perceived an urge within herself to restore the pristine rule of this saint, and to live together with other chosen souls according to his spirit.

Not all, however, looked on her with disfavor. Some of her charges noted that previously there had been very little order in the house, but Sister Angela gave them a new schedule and soon discipline and order were restored. Because she treated everyone alike, she was greatly loved. At night she would walk through the dormitories of the girls to see if everything was in good order; she even gave her own blanket to a girl who was cold, although she had no other for herself. Whenever she had to administer a

correction, she always had some small gift for the offender, to show her love and forgiveness.

Whatever gifts she received, she immediately passed on to the children, keeping nothing for herself. To one of the girls who was in the institute at the time, she later gave three pieces of majolica (Italian pottery) as a wedding present, saying, "I have permission to give these to you; they are from my parents." She was very conscientious in every respect and tried to instill into her charges a deep religious spirit.

A cause of great annoyance was the fact that her brothers, army officers, had purposely moved to the street on which the Institute was located, in order to be near their sister, whom they dearly loved. Their too frequent visits caused disturbance in the order of the day and were an occasion of discord among the Sisters. She was at a loss as to how to terminate this situation without wounding their feelings deeply; only her transfer to Carmel later solved the problem.

Especially evident was her spirit of prayer. Every morning at five o'clock she went to the Carmelite church, where she spent an hour and a half; then she returned home to assist at Holy Mass with the other Sisters in the chapel of the Institute. Very frequently she was seen around the house, praying her rosary. She seemed to be praying always, especially when there were trials and difficulties and problems to be solved; then she would hasten to St. Joseph, her unfailing helper in all her needs. In short, she was regarded by many *as a saint*. Sister Angela had indeed learned to "walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and delivered Himself up for us. . . ." (Eph. 5:2).

During this time she frequently visited the *Käppele* and prayed at the shrine of the Sorrowful Mother. What was this "*Käppele*" that was so dear to the heart of Sister Angela? On the top of a hill in Würzburg stands a beautiful two-hundred-year-old church, known as the "*Käppele*," meaning "little cap" (of the hill).

The *Käppele* has a long and interesting history. According to tradition, the small figure of the Sorrowful Mother with the corpse of Jesus on her lap, a Pietà, which is venerated

at the *Käppele*, was carved by the son of a fisherman around 1640, during the Thirty Years' War. The local people, especially the shepherds and the vinedressers, liked to pray before this image, which was apparently a wayside shrine in the beginning. Eventually the spot became a place of pilgrimage. A document of Bishop F. Melchior Soellner, dated July 6, 1650, reports four miraculous cures at the shrine, and shortly thereafter a small chapel with a board roof was erected over it. In 1684 the chapel was enlarged and a tower was erected. Around 1686, as a result of what were believed to be further miraculous occurrences, the people demanded a further enlarging of the chapel, but the bishop did not give his permission. Many more miraculous cures took place here, and finally in 1690 and again in 1813 the chapel was enlarged. The Feasts of the Annunciation and of the Sorrowful Mother drew the greatest numbers of pilgrims.

It was not until the eighteenth century that the name of the hill on which the chapel with its shrine stood was changed from "*Glessberg*" to "*Käppele*." The Capuchins were given charge of this place of pilgrimage in 1747. . . .

The cornerstone of the present church was laid on April 5, 1748, at that time the Feast of the Sorrowful Mother in Passion Week, but the church was not completed until 1824, after having been wondrously preserved from the fires of the Napoleonic Wars (1800).

This, then, in brief, is the story of the *Käppele* and its Sorrowful Mother shrine, or picture (it is suspended on a wall in a case), which Mother Frances visited during her Würzburg years.<sup>11</sup>

At this sanctuary there lived a pious and saintly Capuchin Father whom Sister Angela consulted and who encouraged her to bring new life and spirit into the Franciscan Order.

One night, as she was again fervently praying before the Tabernacle, the sound of the chapel bell of *Himmelspforten*, which was the Carmelite convent about two miles away on the banks of the Main River, fell upon her ears. At the same time a voice said to her, "Go down there!" In utter amazement she mutely questioned herself, "How can I do this in the middle of the night?" As if borne on eagle wings, she found herself in spirit in the choir of

the Carmelite Sisters, singing the midnight Office with them and hearing the voice of St. Francis, "*You will learn to combine the active with the contemplative life. Enter Carmel and remain there until another sign will be given you.*"<sup>12</sup>

Sister Angela's perplexity was at its peak. Although she felt convinced in her heart that she was called to renew the spirit of St. Francis in a new foundation, unworthy though she deemed herself to be, she had clearly heard the call to enter Carmel. On the following morning she again went to the *Käppele* to obtain advice. She was told to enter Carmel. What an indescribable struggle all this caused her, no one will ever know. The Sisters at the Marian Institute were overwhelmed; they had never expected this, and years later some of the older members remembered, with tears, this particular time of their lives. The superior general herself, now that things had come to a break, did not wish to let her leave the congregation. When she finally yielded, it was under the stipulation that she would return to *Maria Stern* if she did not wish to remain at the Carmel. At the request of Mother Salesia, Sister Angela wrote to the Bishop of Augsburg, Pancratius von Dinkel, in September, 1881, requesting permission to transfer from the Third Order of St. Francis to the Order of Mount Carmel. To give some foundation to her request she proceeded to give a brief summary of her life. Our references to this summary continue here with the account of her call to Carmel:

It was August 4, 1880. In April of that year I had come to the Institute; on this August morning I had to tend to business in the city. Observing this, one of the Sisters said to me: "You may ride part of the way, as some of the ladies of the house are going to *Himmelspforten*." It was Wednesday! Hardly had I heard the word "*Himmelspforten*" when light and understanding pervaded my whole being. Everything now became clear to me and I heard a loud interior voice saying: "Go and ask to be received there; that is where God wishes to have you!" I rode to the convent and asked to speak to the confessor of these nuns. To this religious I presented my desire in a simple request; he took me to the prioress and I was given the assurance that as soon

as one of the Carmelite nuns would depart in death, I would be allowed to enter. It was good St. Joseph who evidently helped me to my desired goal; it was as if everything had been prepared in advance at the Carmelite convent, and yet I was a stranger to this Order and all its circumstances up to this day. I was blissfully happy because all was made clear in regard to what God was asking of me. I saw myself near the goal for which I had been longing for years.

And as I saw days of doubt approaching me, whether or not all this was willed by God — for in those days of greatest distress I had no priest near me who would have guided me in the spiritual life — I realized after much fervent prayer that I should take refuge to a Franciscan Father, whose piety had urged him in later life to leave his parish and serve God as a simple religious. This priest told me decisively, after I had given him the necessary information regarding my situation, that I was obliged to be faithful in holding fast to everything as coming from God. He also advised me to speak openly with the superior general when she would be coming to the city to make new appointments at the orphanage, a thing I could more easily do as my reason for leaving the Franciscan Order was clearly the will of God and not occasioned by human, petty motives.

On February 23, 1881, I spoke to the superior general about my concern; she accepted my disclosure, even though painful to her, yet with noble and pious sentiments, fused with motherly benevolence. No blame, no bitterness, no ill-humor or uncharitable comment came my way. She regretted that she had caused me pain in the recent past because she had been greatly misinformed. If I had not had the full certainty "God calls," I would have yielded to the entreaties of this venerable woman not to leave, because of the loving kindness with which she treated me. This time also, I experienced that the heights of Carmel are hard to scale! As long as I live, I shall honor this noble woman as my spiritual mother and will ask God in prayer and sacrifice to enrich her with the fullest measure of His grace.<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, Sister Angela renewed her petition to the bishop to be permitted to transfer from *Maria Stern* to *Himmelsporten* as soon as there was an opening in Carmel.



# CHAPTER 3

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## **Transfer to the Carmelite Convent**





## “GO DOWN TO CARMEL”

*“Walk in love,  
as Christ also  
loved us . . .”* (Eph 5:2).

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It is sometimes in strange and infrequent ways that the grace of God reaches down into the very depths of a soul and draws that person out of an established environment, to pass through devastating uncertainties, trials, and vicissitudes in order to effect a significant change in society for the betterment of mankind and for the accomplishment of His designs. Although she loved her apostolate of teaching and administrating and felt a close affinity with the children and the Sisters, Sister Angela felt compelled to seek the solitude of Carmel to await whatever dispositions Divine Providence had in store for her.

Mother Salesia, having given verbal consent to the transfer to Carmel, gave her written permission for the same on January 7, 1882. Father Ambrose Käss, prior of the Carmelite Order in Würzburg and also vicar of the Carmel of *Himmelspforten*, in a written communique of January 11, 1882, had likewise informed Bishop Pancratius of the fact that Sister Angela of the Congregation of *Maria Stern* wished to transfer to the Carmelite convent of *Himmelspforten*. Upon their affirmation, the bishop gave his episcopal permission and permitted the transfer under the condition that Sister Angela be accompanied to Carmel by a trustworthy woman, and that she be clothed in the religious habit she had heretofore worn. The transfer was to be reported to him by the superior general as soon as it had been effected, together with a statement from the Carmelite prioress which verified the fact. All this was communicated to Sister Angela by her superior general on January 17.

On the outskirts of the city of Würzburg, on the bank of

the River Main, surrounded by high walls and visible through a row of old poplar trees, stood the convent of *Himmelspforten*. At the time of its foundation by Bishop Hermann of Lobdeburg in 1231, the convent *Coeli Porta*, or *Himmelspforten*, was a solitary spot outside the city. Central to the group of buildings comprising the monastery complex was the early Gothic church with its characteristic Cistercian turret or bell tower. It was originally a monastery for Cistercian contemplative nuns, but after many vicissitudes and through the Act of Secularization of 1803, the nuns were obliged to leave and the monastery became the property of the State. It was used as a military hospital until 1811. At that date it was sold to a merchant from Würzburg, who again opened the church for services but used the convent for a tobacco and dye factory. The convent gardens were used as a park for the people of the city.

On May 4, 1844, four noble ladies from the vicinity of Würzburg finally obtained possession of the convent of *Himmelspforten* in order to found again a contemplative religious house, but this time a Carmelite convent. In that same year the first Carmelite nuns came from Gmunden on the Traunsee in Austria. In 1847 they received papal approbation, and soon the newly founded convent reached its quota of 21 members permitted by their rules.

Into this convent,<sup>1</sup> some thirty-five years after its founding, on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, 1882, Sister Angela transferred in the manner prescribed, and soon after, together with another postulant received the Carmelite habit of a novice and a new name. She was now known as "Sister M. Petra of Alcantara." It is significant that on the day of her clothing, the preacher spoke on the theme, "Thou art Peter," for on the way to the Carmelite convent she had been urged interiorly, in an extraordinary manner, to choose Saints Peter and Paul as special patrons. Was it a special call from God, such as St. Teresa of Avila experienced before she began her foundation, or was it a premonition that in little more than a year, her own imprint would

be on a foundation within the shadow of St. Peter's dome, and on the ground traversed by St. Paul?

The step she had taken seemed at last to be the culmination of her desires, for, as she later wrote to Father Jordan, March 31, the following year: "I had found in Carmel, through prayer and sacrifice, what I had sought for years." She felt great joy at being again in the ranks of the ordinary Sister, where she could practice obedience, without the burden and distractions of her former office of superior. "I became childlike again," she continued, "and came closer to the God of my heart." All the Sisters were impressed by her goodness and kindness. One night, when one of the Sisters had a severe attack of illness, Sister Petra was the first one to assist her. She was greatly revered and esteemed by all, and recognized as one having most sound judgment. Prioress Anna of *Himmelsporten* later said of her, "We all loved her very much and were edified by her devout conduct and her zealous striving for virtue."<sup>2</sup>

Now that she had attained her goal, her one aim was to draw ever closer to Christ in intimate union and love. Grace in abundance seemed to flow into her. She wished to serve the Lord as perfectly as possible in Carmel, in seclusion and perfect obedience. Because she had been led by the Lord in a special way, she was impelled to strive actively for the virtue of humility by acts of self-humiliation and self-abasement, fearing that pride might enter in and bring her to a fall. Formerly she had been led by a light or a voice, but now in Carmel, her relations to God became different; there was an attraction, a nearness, and a perceptible sensation, a deep union of Sister Petra with her Beloved.

As the feast of St. John the Baptist drew near, she was inspired to choose him also as a special patron. Not having had any special devotion to him previously, she was at a loss to know why she should place herself under his patronage. Again a voice assured her, "To prepare the way of the Lord." It was not long after this occurrence that the confessor, without being aware of it, gave her an exhortation on the great sanctity of St. John. She was reassured in her commitment.

The feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel drew near, and now, as a Carmelite, she was interiorly illuminated with the knowledge of what a great, good, and merciful mother we have in Our Blessed Lady. Most earnestly did she pray to her and commend herself to her protection; she felt now that Mary had accepted her, unworthy and sinful though she was, and that ever after she would keep her under her special protection.

As far back as July 20, 1876, she had been inspired in a special way with the desire of leading a life of renunciation and zeal in Carmel; it was the awakening of her Carmelite vocation. Now, on the anniversary of that day, on which the feast of the Death of St. Joseph was celebrated at that time, she was delighted to learn that he was also the patron of the Order of Carmel.

Sister Petra also felt a close affinity with St. Elias and accepted him as one of her patron saints, mindful, however, of the words of Scripture, "He who receives a prophet . . . shall receive the reward of a prophet" (Matt. 10:41).

As to her novitiate in Carmel, she relates that she often had the opportunity of divesting herself of the effects of her ten years' superiorship. Believing that the Lord must have enlightened her mistress in regard to her spiritual direction, she followed her counsels with humility and devotedness, and was protected thereby from deviating into erroneous paths. The priest who was confessor of the Sisters during the first months of her novitiate wished her to disclose to him the course of her interior life, but at this her whole being revolted. She realized that if she did, he would treat her as someone *special*. After repeated urgings, she had the courage to tell him, "Your Reverence, God does not wish that I speak to you about this." In spite of this, the confessor still preserved a loving patience with her, proving by this his exalted virtue.

Concerning the direction of the Lord in the novitiate, Sister Petra tells us, "From the time when the call came to me 'Have the strength of a St. John of the Cross,' from then on everything combined to cleanse my soul from its stains — the confessor, the Sisters, and the powers of light and darkness."<sup>3</sup> We know that

she had no confidence in her confessor, and she tells us that she was glad this painful situation would last only a few months. In conflict with Prioress Anna's statement that the Sisters loved the novice Petra very much, is the evidence of Sister Petra's own statement that she had had to endure the cross of being under suspicion by some who regarded her as an extremist. She continues, "My superiors alone did not waver." They did not waver in their favorable attitude toward her. It was a special grace promised to her at her investiture that, in spite of the fact that she was placed under suspicion and was not skillful enough to win the favor of her superiors by palliation or vindication, she nevertheless remained in their favor. She goes on to say that she would never dare to lead a soul entrusted to her on ways such as she had been led, without the expressed permission of God, and she often wondered how, in her suffering, she did not lose her straight direction and deeper penetration into God, nor her sound mind. She accepted all as atonement for her past sins, believing that she deserved *all this and more*. She felt that it was one of the greatest graces that the bitterness of those days did not enter into her soul, although she had to taste it frequently.

Thus does God prepare his faithful servants and friends for the work he has in store for them. The time was approaching for the Lord to reveal His plans to His faithful servant and handmaid; in His inscrutable designs He had brought her into deepest solitude to prepare her for an active apostolate that would at some future day reach several continents of the world.

It was in the month of June, 1882, as she knelt in prayer before the image of the Sacred Heart, that she asked Our Lord why He had called her to Carmel. Immediately she received the answer, "In order to unite the active life with the contemplative." At once it became clear to her that the Lord was calling her to a religious community which would strive to foster both the active and the contemplative life at the same time. Up to this time she was totally unfamiliar with communications of a higher order, but here was a direct call from God; she realized she was in the mystical state. After this, everything in the guidance of her soul

on the part of God was directed toward making her docile and conformable to His plans. She resisted; she did not want to be a superior again. Despite her love of the cross she fled it, but the Divine Pursuer was relentless.

Several months after her entrance into Carmel a new confessor was appointed for the Sisters — Father Cyprian, a former parish priest who had become a Carmelite and who was a keen discernor of spirits. In him she had great confidence; she could disclose the action of God in her soul and rely on his judgment.

Sister Petra seems undoubtedly to have received, besides the gift of infused contemplation, some mystical gifts, namely, visions and locutions. That these were authentic can be inferred from the fact that she was impelled to practice in an eminent degree the virtues of humility, obedience, and poverty, which could only be effected by a deep faith and firm hope in, and ardent love of God, sustained by self-denial and self-discipline.

The culmination of these locutions, that is to say, announcements of truths or desires communicated by God through corporal or spiritual hearing, came some time during the month of July, 1882. She relates the following:

I now return to the feast of St. Elias [July 20]. . . . A few days later I was praying in the choir in the forenoon and saw something, to me hitherto strange. In spirit I beheld two mountains rise. These two mountains, about the ordinary width of a street, stood in line with each other. The mountain rising on the right was higher than the other and had some sort of gradations. On its summit I believe I saw St. Elias in rather indistinct form; farther down I saw St. Teresa. The other mountain was not so high, probably because it was not so old. In the one I recognized Carmel; in the other, Alverno, on which St. Francis was standing with a cross in his hand. Both mountains arched themselves into one, the higher mountain arching and inclining toward the other from about the place where St. Teresa stood. I had the feeling within me that the two saints wished to draw me up to the center of this mountain, to be as it were the keystone of the arch. I resisted, for in such a thing I was seized with so great a fear of being the plaything of hellish delusion

that more than once the confessor had difficulty quieting me on this point. The call which I received before or after this vision, and which came to me because I could not comprehend why the Lord wished to lead me out of Carmel again, sounded like this: "To unite the active life with the contemplative." Perhaps it will shed light on the occurrence. Carmel may represent prayer; Alverno, activity.<sup>4</sup>

The message was clear, but how was it to be effected? She again preferred to let God decide the time and the manner of its fulfillment. In the meantime she would endeavor to be simply a good novice. How much she prayed once more in regard to this dilemma we can only conjecture. But she also had to make an active move toward its solution. We are aware of the fact that she confided the import of her vision to Father Cyprian, her confessor and the spiritual director of Carmel, for, as she stated, he had great difficulty calming her fears of being the object of diabolical delusion. Because he was bound to secrecy he could not divulge any of the information she confided to him, and he was obliged, therefore, to act in a very discreet manner. On December 1, 1882, he wrote the following letter to Mother M. Salesia Ellersdorfer in Augsburg:

*Jesus + Mary! Peace of Christ!*

CARMELITE CONVENT  
Würzburg  
DECEMBER 1, 1882

Venerable Superior General:

As confessor of the Carmelite Convent of *Himmelspforten* near Würzburg, in the name and *at the request* of the recently transferred Sister Petra to the same convent, formerly Angela in your Order and superior of the Marian Institute, I am to submit to you, Venerable Mother, the following "*Privatissimum*" (very private communication).

Would you be disposed to incorporate the above-named Sister into your province again, and in just such a way as though she had, so to say, never left? For my part, having been in many ways an experienced parish priest before my entrance into the Carmelite Order, I should like herewith to suggest to you, Venerable Mother — but under the seal

of the utmost secrecy, with only the foreknowledge of the provincial and with the plea for you to maintain secrecy for the present at least — that the very gifted and very pious Petra (Angela) could do more good in your Order than in the Carmelite convent.

I consider it as God's will that she should again combine the active with the contemplative life, and would even greet as a blessed thought her return to the position she so admirably held as superior in the Marian Institute, from where she had the courage to bury herself for almost eleven months in the deep solitude of the strict Carmelite life. You, Venerable Mother, may be assured that Sister Angela (as she was known among you) has noticeably advanced in obedience, humility, the spirit of prayer, and all the virtues during these ten months, and that she will render you still greater service than formerly.

To be sure, her withdrawal, just as, in general, her departure, has not been definitely decided upon, but is probably very imminent. Would you, *I ask again in Angela's name*, be prepared to send to the good Sister the religious garb and the decree of acceptance as soon as the question is entirely settled? Or could you, Venerable Mother, in whose love and kindness Sister Petra (Angela) puts all her confidence, immediately *send her a well-fitting habit*, such as she wore before? Will you, in case her leaving, that is, her withdrawal occurs, call her to Augsburg or to another of your religious houses? Since all, yes, all the nuns, like the confessor, were very satisfied with her, therefore I do not deny that I feel very interested concerning a favorable readmission which you on your part, Venerable Superior General, will grant the pious novice, and that I would wish a significant field of work for her, who will step from the cell of prayer, renewed in strength, into the active life for the honor of God and your fine Order. Yet, herewith your rights, Venerable Mother, must not in the least be encroached upon. Simply do as you think best; but be so kind as to answer the above-mentioned points as far as possible for the present, for Sister Angela's orientation and for my consolation, as her confessor.

In case of the refusal of Sister Angela's readmission, my advice and the decision of our novice will undergo modification. I add that total and deliberate silence is being observed by all until everything concerning this matter is completely settled. I would therefore consider it advisable for



you, Venerable Mother, to send the letter to me as soon as possible in an envelope well sealed and addressed to the Reverend Spiritual Director, Michael Beckert, pastor of St. Peter's here — hence, through him, without his having any knowledge of its contents.

I would consider it indiscreet on my part, were I to bear the blame for the spread of the rumor of her leaving, and I must also take into account the request of Sister Angela, who does not wish the prior of my convent, who otherwise reads all letters according to venerable convent regulations, to open a letter which treats of such a delicate matter. The consideration given her request and my opinion that it deals in a way with conscience matter, suggested to me this small deceit. So then, Venerable Mother, may I ask you to let me know your opinion in the points in question, sending it not directly to me but through the agency of the spiritual director and pastor, Michael Beckert.

I would incur displeasure if you were to write directly to me, since, according to our strict regulations, I should not even address this letter to you without letting the prior read it, which in this case I cannot do.

With greatest respect and a plea for prayer in the Heart of the Redeemer,

Your servant in Christ,  
*P. Cyprian, Carmelite*

Strictly speaking, the course followed by Father Cyprian was not the correct procedure to follow. Sister Petra herself should have approached her prioress and asked for the transfer, but she naturally shrank from disclosing the reason — the vision of the two mountains and the call to unite action with contemplation in what she supposed and knew to be a new congregation. Neither was the procedure according to canon law as it existed prior to its revision in 1901, for at that time all correspondence of members of a religious institute, men or women, was subject to censorship by the superior. It is not surprising that the superior general, Mother Salesia Ellersdorfer, was greatly astonished by this letter and not a little incensed by the request it contained. She replied on December 4, 1882, with the following lines:

Your Reverence's esteemed communication of December

I was most astonishing to me, not because of the person involved, but more so because of the manner in which I am now expected to make a decision regarding the matter in question. In the letter it is not stated whether M. Angela is no longer disposed to bear the burden which the Carmelite Order imposes, or whether she probably fears a negative reply to a definitive acceptance there. I do not deem it the proper time to express my personal opinion, which I had already previously formed.

I must observe that the Reverend Father Prior of the Carmelite convent in Würzburg himself acted as intermediary with our Most Reverend Bishop, so that no obstacle would be put in the way of the respective person's entry into Carmel, since he had convinced himself that she was wholly called to this strict Order.

I must also allow myself the observation that it is not at all proper for me as a superior of my religious congregation to enter into a correspondence which is definitely against the expressed rules of the Order.

Confidently I entrust the whole affair to God, and if a request or whatever it may be, will be made in official form, that is, by her present superiors concerning the release of M. Angela from the Carmelite Order, I shall act in accordance with the ecclesiastical regulations.

On that same day, Father Beckert, who was spiritual director at the Marian Institute as well as pastor of St. Peter's Church in Würzburg, informed the superior general that the news of Sister Petra's leaving had not surprised him, nor the fact that she wished to remain in Würzburg. The whole affair called forth from him an unfavorable reaction. He wrote:

Venerable Mother General:

I have just learned that M. Angela has requested the religious garb of you, through her confessor. That this would happen I foresaw and predicted and therefore this information did not surprise me.

But very displeasing to me was the communication that your answer should pass through my hands and that M. Angela wishes to stay in Würzburg.

In regard to this I wish to inform you that Father Cyprian acted in this manner without my knowledge and against my

will, and that I cannot accept M. Angela in the Marian Institute. In the name of God I shall act the postman for Father Cyprian.

With all due respect,

Your devoted  
*Father Beckert, pastor*

MARIAN INSTITUTE  
DEC. 4, 1882.

Father Beckert evidently asked Mother Bernarda, who was then superior at the Marian Institute, to add a few lines, giving her opinion of the situation. Not knowing the actual reasons underlying the wish of Sister Angela to leave Carmel, Mother Bernarda evidently misconstrued her motives and wrote in haste:

I wish to add a few lines to those of the Reverend Spiritual Director. Poor Venerable Mother! I have wept so much to-day already. But I always had a presentiment that it would happen this way. M. Angela would soon have caused division in *Himmelsporten*. She wanted to found an entirely new Order. I cannot write everything now, as the spiritual director urges that the letter be sent off. I myself should really have come to the dear motherhouse to tell you everything. But one thing I ask of you with uplifted hands, dear Venerable Mother. Let M. Angela be called for, so that she does not remain one hour in Würzburg. Everything would be thrown into confusion. I simply cannot understand her disposition, that she should have the least desire to return to the Marian Institute. Oh, do spare me.

In loyal, filial love,

Your  
*M. Bernarda, O.S.F.*

In all haste.

Because of the revelations concerning her call to unite the active with the contemplative life, Sister Petra had come to see that it was the will of God that she leave the convent of *Himmelsporten*. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1882, while visiting the crypt of the convent to pray for the dead, she definitely decided to make a formal declaration to the Mother Prioress of Carmel of her decision to leave. She cited as her reason

her declining health and asked the prioress to grant permission for her to leave Carmel.

Shortly after this, Mother Salesia replied to Father Beckert stating definitely that she did not intend to assign Sister Angela to her former office of superior at the Marian Institute. She wrote on December 12:

A few days ago Your Reverence wrote to me on account of M. Angela, and my letter to Father Cyprian will also have reached the Reverend addressee through you. I could not, as superior of a religious congregation, condescend to participate in a correspondence which is against the rules of the Order. The contents of which the Reverend Pater's letter treats, you can conjecture; I was asked to keep it confidential. That you, Reverend Spiritual Director, were selected as intermediary for this does not create any distrust in me. Oh, no! If M. Angela does not receive acceptance at the convent of *Himmelsporten*, I think the matter will be as unpleasant for you as it has been for me, though not at all suprrprising. I have no intention whatsoever of assigning her again to her former position. After all, M. Angela entered a strict convent upon due reflection. That the Lord may grant her perseverance is my urgent plea to God for her. As far as I know, Sister Bernarda and her Sisters are doing well; I recommend all of them to your further care and priestly benevolence.

With greatest respect, I remain

Your Reverence's grateful servant,  
Mother Salesia Ellersdorfer, O.S.F.,  
Superior

AUGSBURG, ST. M. STERN  
DEC. 12, 1882

It is evident from the above that Mother Salesia did not know that Sister Petra had received the favorable vote to be admitted to profession in Carmel. Nothing more is said about Sister Petra's return to the *Maria Stern* convent, nor is there any evidence that she had any direct communication with her former superior of *Maria Stern*.

As to the vows which still bound her to her former institute, she wrote to the Bishop of Augsburg on May 10, 1884:

I never sought any special ecclesiastical permission to leave and return to the world, and to wear secular clothing, because at that time I did not know that such a permission was necessary. Moreover, at the time this step was taken, no one brought to my attention the necessity of such a permission. Had I known of it, I certainly would have taken the necessary steps to procure the same.

This statement of hers is clear evidence that she acted in good faith. Similarly, it would seem, all those concerned with her departure from Carmel and the question of accepting her once more in the *Maria Stern* Congregation acted as they saw best under the circumstances.

Amalia Streitel therefore left the convent of *Himmelsporten* in mid-December, 1882, in secular dress. Her brother waited for her at the gate and accompanied her to the railroad station, from where she boarded the train for her home in Bamberg, her parents having moved to that city in 1873.

Was it all an illusion, a phantasy, which had now ended in a disastrous awakening to reality? Ah, no! God was leading his most dear child "to walk in love, as Christ also loved us, an offering and a pleasing sacrifice" (Eph. 5:2). The victim had been prepared and was now ready for the altar of sacrifice! "God was writing straight with crooked lines."



# CHAPTER 4

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## **Conflict of Ideals**

"FOR MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR  
THOUGHTS, NOR ARE YOUR WAYS  
MY WAYS!" (Isaiah 55:8)

*"even as Christ loved us"*  
(Eph 5:2).

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Once more Amalia found herself within the circle of her immediate family, with her parents and under their parental roof, but what a homecoming! Where she had once been the object of their legitimate pride and esteem, she was now the subject of gossip and humiliation. Her parents, sensitive to this embarrassing situation, preferred that she keep to her room as much as possible; her sister Hedwig only was sympathetic to her in her painful loneliness. Amalia was even now tasting the bitter cup of sorrow and experiencing somewhat of what it means to love Christ "even as Christ loved us." We can only surmise how keenly she must have felt the hurt she was inflicting on her parents by her unwanted presence at home, and how deeply she deplored the grief she was causing them in their declining years.

As for herself, feeling keenly the unpleasantness of her situation, she could only trust that God was somehow leading her to the place destined for her. She knew the "potter was shaping the clay" into the form that He desired, not what she wanted. "Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done? says the Lord. Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand . . ." (Jer. 18:6). It would be left to her to breathe into the vessel the special spirit God had infused into her; and so she waited patiently, making no hasty decision of any kind. She lived her life in complete faith in God, striking out into the unknown, upon an uncharted course, with the firm hope and trust that God would launch her safely at the destiny He had appointed for her. She spent most of her time in the church of



St. Gangolf, praying for light and strength to accept God's dispensations in her regard, and in her unwanted inactivity "to prepare the way for the Lord," as she had been told before.

She was, however, not forgotten by the Sisters at *Himmelspforten*, and in response to her New Year's greetings to them, Sister Mary Stanisla, presumably her novice mistress, sent the following letter, showing much concern for the spiritual and physical well-being of her former spiritual daughter:

*Praised be Jesus and Mary!*

HIMMELSPFORTEN  
DECEMBER 29, 1882

My dear, beloved spiritual daughter,

May the love of Jesus  
ever dwell in our hearts. Amen!

I had indeed expected a letter at Christmas to learn if my child had arrived safely at home and whether the emotions of the last day had had any harmful effect on her health. But in the paternal home, in loving surroundings, the heart regains its peace and our loving Lord fills it with plentiful consolation and peace.

Dark and thorny are often the ways on which Divine Providence leads souls, and the heart is often fearful of what is to become of it, how it is to attain its goal. Yet the Lord has already paved the way on which He will conduct the soul with surety in order to lead it to where, according to His most holy will, it should work in His holy service. And the blessed heart feels richly consoled and compensated for so many sufferings and humiliations which it has borne out of fervent love, in order to resemble its divine Savior more closely in His suffering.

Dear spiritual daughter, carry patiently the cross the Lord assigns to you. Seek to increase in love of the cross and to choose it for your portion. Thus it will flower into salvation and blessing for you, as is stated in the lovely poem you so kindly enclosed. For this and for the beautiful little picture I sincerely thank you. I also thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the holy prayers you have already offered to God for me, and for all those which I am sure you will yet pray for me, especially for a happy hour of death, for the grace to direct the precious souls entrusted to me according

to the will and pleasure of God, and to lead them to perfection, on which course I myself am the most imperfect. As spiritual mother I consider it my duty to pray much for my child, that it may not succumb in the struggles and contradictions of this life but always gather fresh courage to embrace the cross again, to follow the Lord faithfully until He has led it to the splendid goal and received it into a religious congregation.

After the novitiate prayer in choir, Sister Agnes and I pray an Our Father and Hail Mary every day, with the addition, "O Sacred Heart of Jesus. . . ."

Dear Sister Petra, since you had so many indications toward *Himmelsporten*, which have not been realized, it occurred to me that the convent originally belonged to the Cistercian Order. It may be that St. Bernard wanted you for his Order and only let you prepare for it with us.

Please give my respectful regards to your revered parents and dear sister, with best wishes for all good for the New Year. Sister Veronica, Sister Dionysia, and the lay Sisters were very happy with the greetings and heartily greet you also. Our Ven. Mother Prioress, as well as all the Sisters, thank you for the greetings and best wishes for the New Year, and they also greet you and wish you everything good for the New Year. May the Sacred Heart grant the desire of my dear spiritual daughter for the religious habit in the coming year. This is the ardent wish of your faithfully loving spiritual mother, in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

*Sister Mary Stanisla of Jesus.*<sup>1</sup>

Prior to her departure from Carmel, Father Cyprian had suggested to Sister Petra the possibility of joining Father Francis Jordan, founder of the Catholic Teaching Society in Rome, as his collaborator in the female branch of his new foundation. This may have been one of the reasons why she did not attempt to return to her own community of *Maria Stern*, since she was convinced that somehow God was using her, unworthy though she deemed herself to be, as an instrument in the founding of a new congregation which would fuse action and contemplation in the Franciscan ideal of poverty and gospel living.

Accordingly, Father Cyprian had in the meantime written to

Father Jordan in Rome, consulting him on the new foundation and asking whether or not he would be willing to accept Miss Streitel as his collaborator, since their views seemed to coincide.

As the facets of a diamond reflect many colors of sunlight, so do God's chosen servants mirror many attributes of God. Father Jordan was one of these favored and gifted persons, whose accomplishments were many, and whose desire was to carry God's word to the ends of the earth. John Baptist Jordan was born in Gurtweil, Baden, Germany, June 16, 1848. At the age of fifteen, after the untimely death of his father, he was obliged to work on various construction projects for some years. He would have loved to study but was denied the means thereto. He was gifted as a decorator, and having received his testimonials of competence, traveled widely, practicing his trade.

He began and continued his studies for the priesthood in Germany at the age of twenty-one in a private manner with the assistant pastor of Waldshut. His extraordinary ability of learning languages won for him the privilege of entering the Gymnasium at Constance. In 1874 he became a student of theology and philosophy at the Grand Duke Albrecht Ludwig University of Baden at Freiburg in Breisgau, and his immediate preparation for the priesthood was spent at St. Peter's Seminary in Freiburg. He was ordained to the priesthood on July 21, 1878, by Bishop von Kuebel in St. Peter's Church in Freiburg, behind locked doors, because of the raging Kulturkampf. For this reason he also celebrated his first Holy Mass at Doettingen in Switzerland. He then went to Rome on a scholarship to the Apollinaris, where he studied Oriental languages, living in the Campo Santo, where Msgr. De Waal was rector.

Even before his ordination, Father Jordan had already been thinking of founding a Society, world-wide, as he envisioned it, for the spreading of Christian truth and stimulating greater fervor among Catholics by a more skillful and fruitful use of every lawful means. This idea need not surprise us, as this was the age of revival of the missionary spirit, and there arose many religious congregations as well as societies for the strengthening and propa-

gation of the faith. Toward the end of January, 1880, he went to the Holy Land, where he had an extraordinary experience of grace. It crystallized his idea of a society for the teaching of religious truth; in fact, this was the real birth of the missionary, as the words seared themselves into his soul, "Now, this is everlasting life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).<sup>2</sup>

At this point in time, 1883, Father Jordan's dream was already an organized society, bearing the name of "The Catholic Teaching Society." In 1894 the Holy See requested him to change the title to "Society of the Divine Savior."

Having received Father Cyprian's request regarding Amalia, Father Jordan commissioned Father Luethen, his representative in Munich, to examine her case and report back to him. Luethen forwarded the letters of Father Cyprian and Father Jordan to Amalia through Miss Thecla Bayer, who had been superior of a first attempt by Luethen to begin a female branch for the Society in Germany.

Late in the evening of January 26, 1883, Miss Bayer came from Munich to the Streitel home and requested to see Amalia. She presented her with the letters from Father Cyprian and Father Jordan. Amalia had had a premonition that something of significance was to happen that day, and her presentiment was fulfilled. Miss Bayer wore a long black dress and a large crucifix on her breast. She immediately addressed Amalia with the words, "I am the superior general, Thecla Bayer." After being led into the parlor, she forthwith appointed her as the mistress of novices and wished that, as soon as possible, she travel with her to Rome.

The whole affair looked suspicious, and the Streitel family were unpleasantly impressed, doing their utmost to dissuade Amalia from following such an uncertain and foolhardy course of action. Miss Bayer then left.

There was at this time a girl employed in the Streitel home by the name of Barbara Demer (later, Sister Scholastica). She had been a postulant in a Dominican convent in Landsberg, Bavaria, and to all appearances was ready to receive the Domin-

ican habit in the near future. Then she had a dream, which was repeated three times. She saw the future Mother Frances in a gray habit and a white cord, a black veil which was drawn together at the forehead in very small pleats, and a white wimple, but she had no idea who she was. The Sister came to her saying, "Come with me, far from here to a new place of work." Barbara went with her to an uncultivated field and was given some tiny little trees to plant. In the distance, there was a priest coming toward them, after many seedlings had been planted. Then she awoke. Being quite pensive over these dreams, she was questioned as to her quiet behavior, as she was usually lively and outgoing. "Well, mad-cap, of what are you thinking?" asked the mistress. And so the dream came to be revealed and was brought to the attention of the prioress, who said to Barbara, "Perhaps God wants you for a new project. Some of our Sisters are going to Africa; it may be that God wants you there. We will make a novena to St. Dominic to show us the will of God."

On the ninth day, although Barbara had no trace of illness, during the night her foot swelled up and pained terribly. The doctor was called. What he diagnosed we do not know, but he said the foot would have to be amputated. The Sisters telegraphed her father and he wired to send her home at once. He came to get her and then took her to St. Anthony's Institute, where kind Sister Flaviana of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul treated her foot. In one week she was able to walk again. Barbara wanted to go back to the convent at Landsberg immediately, but the prioress cautioned her to wait a few months. She asked her to help out for the time being a very pious family whose maid had just become ill; it was the Streitel family.

When Barbara attended Mass at St. Gangolf's Church in Bamberg after her arrival at the Streitel home, she saw and recognized at the communion railing the face of the Sister of her dream, but she could not speak to her then. Later, they met at the holy water font. Amalia looked at her in a friendly manner and said, "Young lady, you were in an Order in which a white habit is worn! Do you know, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has given you to

me for a new work. You must go with me to Rome!"<sup>3</sup>

We can readily imagine how surprised Barbara was; but she recalled her dreams, and after several interviews with Amalia, decided that this must be what God wanted of her. Yet things did not work out so smoothly. The Dominican prioress who had advised postulant Barbara to help out only temporarily in the Streitel home vehemently opposed the idea and sent her to Archbishop Schreiber. He also cautioned against it and opposed such an uncertain move as going to Rome in such troubled times to found a new Order. Only his Vicar General upheld her, saying to him, "Your Excellency, we may not anticipate the Providence of God. It is necessary that new congregations be founded so that the old ones may be shaken up."<sup>4</sup> He even offered her the money to travel.

Barbara was present on the evening when Thecla Bayer came to the Streitel home. Thecla immediately invited her to become a candidate and go to Rome with her, but Barbara did not feel this was the right person to whom she should commit herself for such an important undertaking. She spoke to Amalia, who consoled her, saying, "Things will turn out differently," and telling her to remain firm because the lady would not be the one to take them to Rome. God had given her to them only as a guide. And so it was.<sup>5</sup>

The parents of Amalia as well as those of Barbara were exceedingly anxious and worried about the future of their daughters and fought many a battle with them in regard to their decision to leave for Rome. Nevertheless, Amalia soon left for Munich to consult with Father Luethen. She made a very good impression on him, and he recommended her as suitable in every way to be the head of the new Sisterhood which Father Jordan wished to establish in connection with the Catholic Teaching Society. Father Jordan thereupon invited Amalia to come to Rome with Miss Bayer. But in Munich, Miss Bayer became seriously ill.<sup>6</sup> Amalia cared for her and informed Father Jordan of the fact. On February 11, 1883, he commanded her in a written communique to leave for Rome immediately, most probably because he had rented an

apartment for the expected arrivals. Since another young lady, Margaret Eck, had announced her coming, both she and Barbara were to travel at a later date.

Amalia now began her journey into the unknown, to the Eternal City of Rome, trusting wholly in the providential guidance of God as He had manifested His divine will to her in all the events of the past months. She has left us no record of her first impressions of the waving pines and the splashing fountains of Rome, or the feelings that must have surged through her whole being as she beheld for the first time the magnificent church dedicated to the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Her notebook records only, "Arrived in Rome, February 16." Neither do we know where she stayed the first two or three days in Rome. She was most probably shown the apartment rented for the first group of community members on the first floor of No. 151 on Via Borgo Nuovo, and found it exactly suited to her humble desires, as she soon wrote the following lines to Father Jordan:

For your consolation I believe I can say the dwelling rented by Your Reverence is the one destined by the Lord for the initial work. I would have been astonished had we received a different one. I looked calmly upon all, in regard to the dwelling as well as to Miss Bayer. I commend all to the Lord and thereby profit the most.<sup>7</sup>

On first meeting Amalia, Father Jordan must have been as favorably impressed as Father Luethen was in Munich. Both were impressed with her spirit of poverty, for they, too, like the Apostles, wished to live disencumbered from this world's goods, to be free to go to the ends of the earth to spread the message of Christ. Father Jordan, therefore, asked Amalia to take charge of the Sisterhood and be its superior. Amalia felt that if she was to head the female branch of the Society, he, as the superior, should know exactly what her ideals and aspirations were in regard to its rule and spirit. On the second day after her arrival, she began to unfold her thoughts in the following letter:

*Praised be Jesus, Mary, Joseph!*

Most Reverend Director General, my dear Reverend Father:

First permit me to do in writing what I would otherwise have to do by word of mouth. Humbly I beg you by the wounds of our Redeemer, accept me, Reverend Father, as your spiritual daughter. Be concerned that what the Lord has done by His poorest instrument may take shape more and more, that what she must recognize as the holy will of God may come to fulfillment. In this matter have no regard for the weak woman you see in me. No, have more regard for the words of Holy Scripture: "God chooses the weak to confound the strong." The Lord gave this woman a strong faith, confident hope, and a glowing love. He guided her on unexpected and unusual ways to strengthen her fidelity in His chosen service. Grace taught her two prayers: the one, "Lord, annihilate me beneath Your feet and let me in turn be raised up in Your most Sacred Heart"; the other, "Lord, I wish to have a thousand lives in order to surrender them all to You in unspeakable tortures." The fruit of these prayers was an increase of love of God and of neighbor which was intimately united with love of holy poverty. Say to me whatever you like in regard to this last-named virtue. As soon as the word "poverty" sounds in my ear, my whole being experiences holy joy.

Therefore I beg you to be strong wherever there is a question of safeguarding the cause of perfect poverty. Fear nothing in this regard. The great poor one of Assisi will intercede the more for your God-willed foundation in the contradictions concerning the surest fundamental virtue for a new spiritual structure, the less you consent that the purity of this mistress of the great father be stained by robbing it somewhat of its original observance. Be anxiously concerned, Reverend Father, to guide truly poor members to Holy Mother Church, for thereby you will be giving her at the same time humble and obedient children, since one who is truly poor is also humble and obedient. I call poverty the mother of religious virtues.

You must learn to know the dispositions of your new daughter — dispositions which the Lord Himself taught her and confirmed in her by suffering and pain. Therefore I have submitted them in writing. . . .

Now for the practical. For tomorrow I would ask you to provide for three bedsteads plus three chairs, one table, very plain and unvarnished, then straw and some cooking



utensils. The latter may not be of white porcelain but of ordinary material. Either tomorrow evening or Tuesday morning we will move into the house of holy poverty. I beg only for your holy blessing and for you to determine when I may come and get it. . . .

With sentiments of deep respect, my Reverend Father,  
Your obedient spiritual daughter,  
*M. Petra*

ROME, FEBRUARY 18, 1883.

We can well imagine with what astonishment and concern, perhaps even dismay, the above letter must have filled Father Jordan. He evidently suffered great perplexity as the fact dawned upon him that their ideals of the proposed religious foundation were quite at variance. Father Jordan was undoubtedly a man of deep spirituality and fervent prayer, but at this point his idea of the proposed foundation was not a "religious order," hemmed in and bound by religious vows, especially the poverty Amalia (M. Petra, as she still signed herself) suggested. He was a zealous missionary, whose field of labor was to be world-wide in scope. His foundation of a missionary society had been laid; it was not just an isolated event, but a part of the whole missionary current which was sweeping Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century. In this current were caught up religious and lay people, men and women from every walk of life, who were interested in spreading the faith and helping especially those who had migrated to other countries. America, at that time, was linked to the missionary endeavor.

Upon this concept Father Jordan was trying to build a Society where members could participate in three degrees; it was to be directed from a center and be comprised of (1) both priests and laity who gave themselves completely to the Society by forsaking all things and following the example of the holy Apostles, who preached the gospel everywhere; (2) all who wished to be co-workers in their special fields of labor, such as teachers, writers, printers, etc.; (3) all Christians who supported the Society in their own way and according to their own means.

In regard to the practice of poverty, the views of Father Jordan and Amalia also differed widely because their concept of the levels of the practice of poverty differed. Each one saw in its observance a different purpose: Father Jordan feared that a too rigid poverty would hamper the spread and work of the Society, while Amalia wanted poverty to be an aid to detachment from material things in order to free the soul entirely for union with God. Both, however, favored a strict observance according to their individual concepts. Here was a case of conflicting ideals, which would involve a prolonged struggle and would be solved only in a painful manner.

Father Jordan must have expressed his surprise and disapproval to Amalia quite frankly. He tried to modify the rigid external poverty that she was advocating for the Society, for in her next letter of February 20, 1883, she apologizes to him for the decisive and authoritative tone in which she addressed him. She promised to say nothing more that might have a determining influence on the proposed foundation; he had asked her opinion and she had given it in all sincerity, but she begged him not to ask her again. All she wished was to pray, struggle, and suffer for the new *work*, so that the new members might have the grace to lead an ascetical life and thereby oppose the "tide of shallowness in religious life."<sup>8</sup>

We gather from this last phrase that Amalia's former experience convinced her that religious life must be renewed, not once, but continually, to preserve its pristine fervor. As we have seen, during her years at St. Elizabeth's Home in Würzburg, she had, in her opinion, grown lukewarm and somewhat lax. According to her interpretation of the Franciscan rule, she considered herself lukewarm and lax because she had followed the interpretation of the rule commonly held by most of the Sisters. Lack of prayer because of too much preoccupation with pets and hobbies, too frequent use of the parlor beyond the bounds of charity, and little practice of self-denial — all these may have been isolated events and the acts of certain individuals, but they gave rise and urgency to Amalia's desire for a form of austere religious life that combined action with contemplation very closely, under the virtue of poverty

as the keystone of the edifice. How close she was to the ideals expressed by Vatican II can be seen in the following excerpt:

To this end, as they seek God before all things and only Him, the members of each Community should combine contemplation with apostolic love. By the former they adhere to God in mind and heart; by the latter they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the Kingdom of God.<sup>9</sup>

Because of her former experience in the Franciscan Order which she had left, Amalia knew that reform is a costly thing, and she was therefore determined to lay the foundation on a firm ascetical basis, knowing that this is the indispensable prerequisite for a life of fervent union with God, which alone gives meaning to religious dedication. Again, could she have anticipated Vatican II more clearly?

. . . Those who profess the evangelical counsels love and seek before all else that God who took the initiative in loving us (cf. 1 John 4:10); in every circumstance they aim to develop a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col. 3:3). Such dedication gives rise and urgency to the love of one's neighbor for the world's salvation and the upbuilding of the Church. From this love the very practice of the evangelical counsels takes life and direction.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the fact that she had asked Father Jordan not to seek her opinion, he insisted nevertheless that she write down her thoughts. She therefore wrote to him on February 21 that it might be well to observe the original rule which St. Francis had given to St. Clare, with the addition of a few regulations from St. Teresa. Regarding prayer she wrote:

In regard to the morning prayer, about six months ago I came to realize that the soul in close union with Holy Church will find the prayer of "Prime" translated into the mother tongue, the most appropriate. Also with regard to the night prayer of the Church, "Compline," I am altogether in favor of it. I am not readily disposed to *prayers*, but as soon as I hear of *prayers of the Church*, all my inclinations

turn to them, and I often feel that special power and blessing are attached to these prayers.

However, she told Father Jordan to draft the rule, since God would enlighten him in this regard; she wished in no way that her name be associated with the new foundation.

When the question of the habit came up, in this also the two were not of the same opinion. She submitted to him a model of the habit she desired and which she said she had seen "in spirit"; it was gray in color, bound at the waist with a white cord.

During this interval of time, the first three postulants joined the new community; they were Margaret Eck and Barbara Demer, who arrived from Germany on March 6, 1883, and Sabina Schmausser, who entered sometime in February. Sister Scholastica, as Barbara was later known, gives us a little glimpse into their lives in the early days of the foundation:

How exceedingly happy we were when we entered the Holy City and saw our Ven. Mother Foundress again! We felt that she was a chosen soul, and her example proved it to us. She prayed whole nights or slept only on a board, which surely tired her more than to sleep on the bare floor. . . . When we rose early in the morning, she had already washed up the little chapel and two or three rooms. She also did our washing alone and took care of the kitchen. True, there was little to cook, as we had bitter salad with bread at noon, and the same in the evening. Occasionally we were given an apple or other cheap fruit with bread and in the morning a little black coffee. . . . Sundays we had, as "feast day fare," macaroni and salad. Once a week the seven major churches were visited, if the weather permitted. On those occasions we took a loaf of bread and a cup with which to dip water.

Ven. Mother Foundress took care of the housekeeping, and we two Sisters set the type for the printery of the Catholic Teaching Society in order to earn a little money for our livelihood, for we were poor and needed our little bit of money for the rent.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after the arrival of the first postulants, Amalia asked Father Jordan formally for the religious habit. She promised him

obedience in a special way if he would accept her as his spiritual daughter. She also asked permission for the Sisters to wear a simple veil and headdress which by its simplicity would counteract feminine vanity. In this same letter of March 14, she asked Father Jordan to "have the courage of our Holy Father Francis. . . . Take the name of this pattern of holiness with the addition 'of the cross'," she wrote, not knowing that Father Jordan had already signed himself "John Mary Francis of the Cross."<sup>12</sup> What had happened during this short period of their exchange of views and opinions is truly remarkable, for Father Jordan's views did move from a society toward a religious order; he made his own religious profession on what was then Passion Sunday, March 11, 1883, signed himself "John Mary Francis of the Cross," and wore for a time a gray habit. From his personal notes about the Sisters in Rome from 1883 to 1885, we read the following: "At first, we wore an ashen gray garment; it was rough like that of the Capuchins, as for penance. . . . The first Sisters, too, . . . whom I founded, wore a gray habit in the beginning. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

That Father Jordan must have suffered embarrassment or met with opposition in regard to the garb we can infer from the content of several letters Mother Frances wrote to him shortly thereafter, in one of which she states, "Do not be deterred by the rough external aspect of this pearl. . . . Poverty will be the foundation of the new Order; contempt, its guard of honor."<sup>14</sup>

Amalia would have loved to make her vows at Assisi on March 18, but Father Jordan did not permit it. Instead, at Vesper time she clothed herself in the habit blessed by him the day before, removed her shoes and stockings and put on a pair of light shoes, for lack of sandals. Thus, renewed inwardly and outwardly, she recited Vespers with her companions. Her soul, she affirms, was transported by grace and words failed her, for she felt so close to the Lord. At last she could again "walk in love," so close to her desired goal.

At the end of the Compline, Father Jordan sent word that he would come, so that she could make her vows. On the evening of this Palm Sunday, she pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity,

and obedience before her only spiritual Father, Francis Jordan of the Cross, general director of the Catholic Teaching Society:

*Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Francis and Clare!*

Before the most holy Trinity, the most Blessed Virgin Mary, the glorious St. Joseph, the Seraphic Father Francis and the holy Mother Clare, likewise all the angels and saints, I vow *obedience, poverty, chastity*, and I place these vows in the hands of my spiritual Father and my only Superior, the servant of God

John Francis of the Cross,  
general director of the Catholic Teaching Society,  
with the solemn promise to know no other will but the will of God, which shall be made known to me through the above-named servant of God.

Signed by the vower

*M. Frances of the Cross*

*S.C.I.*

ROME, MARCH 18, 1883

Below her signature, Father Jordan added the conditions of his acceptance:

The undersigned reserves the privilege to dispense above-mentioned vows in part or entirely. Under these conditions they were pronounced and accepted.

*John Francis d.c. [de Cruce]*

ROME, ON THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH, 1883.

For the first time Amalia had signed herself "M. Frances of the Cross." Truly she could say, "What I longed for, I now see; what I hoped for, I now possess; . . . I am espoused to him whom on earth I loved with all my heart" (Morning prayer: Office of St. Agnes).

On the following Easter Sunday, March 25, 1883, the three postulants received the holy habit: Barbara Demer, who became Sister Scholastica; Margaret Eck, Sister Catherine; and Sabina Schmausser, Sister Agnes. On this same day, Mother Frances wrote to Father Jordan, "Today God's loving Providence gave you three daughters." On behalf of the Sisters, she begged that Father Jordan would consider and approve three proposals: that they

observe perpetual abstinence, that they go barefoot, except for sandals, and that they recite the Divine Office.

As these first Sisters were all from a German-speaking country and were unfamiliar with the language spoken in the country in which they were now living, steps were taken immediately to remedy this situation. We learn from one of the letters of Mother Frances at this time that Father Bonaventure Luethen was teaching Italian to the Sisters, as she apologizes for her lack of attention due to her preoccupation with a special problem. Since this letter was written before the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, which at the time was celebrated in April, during the third week after Easter, she asked that the words "of St. Joseph" be added to the title of the Society. "My love for St. Joseph is identical with my love for Jesus and Mary. . . . St. Joseph taught me to know and to love Jesus and Mary."

Mother Frances had now reached a definite point in her journey into the unknown; her confidence in God had not been in vain. She was again a religious in a community where she hoped to be able to live out her religious ideals. She was not alone in her joy at being once more in the "house of the Lord." The Sisters at *Himmelspforten* rejoiced also, as is evident from a letter which Sister Stanisla wrote to her somewhat earlier:

*Praised be Jesus and Mary.*

My dear spiritual daughter,

May the grace of the Holy Spirit  
ever increase in our souls. Amen!

The passage at the head of your esteemed letter, "Whoever hopes in the Lord will not be put to shame," has so clearly applied to you, for the way on which God has led you hitherto has been sorrowful, and yet your firm confidence that all would contribute to your good remained unshakable and evoked from you the oft repeated words: "Oh, how good God is!"

Yes, it was the kind Providence of God which led you into the Carmel, not to remain here, however, but to prepare you through those exercises in which you had to participate and to make you capable of setting to work immediately at the new beginning to which He has called you, to put into

effect the convent order and regulations in common use. It was a great joy for me and dear Sister Agnes when Reverend Father Confessor told us that Sister Petra was called to Rome and had *again* been admitted into a religious house. We have continued our prayers until now for our dear Sister Petra and we also ask to be remembered in yours. We ask you to beg the great Princes of the Apostles and holy Mother Teresa for a special grace, that both of us become holy. You must not, however, ascribe to my unworthy prayers the great grace that the Lord, in His infinite mercy, has called you so soon into His holy service again, and to such a God-pleasing work. The compassion for your interior and exterior sufferings, as well as the concern for your health was an obligation from the Lord to take care of His lambs and keep watch over them. But may my dear spiritual daughter implore of Him, according to His great mercy, to grant her prayer that I may die in the perfect love of God. It gives us great pleasure that your dwelling is so near the Carmelites and that you even belong to the parish in charge of the Carmelite Fathers. We kindly ask you, if you visit them sometime, to give our respectful greetings to the Reverend Father General.

In your new field of labor you will have much opportunity to practice poverty and to carry on with mortifications and self-denials. Nevertheless, the love for Jesus Christ, your heavenly Bridegroom, whose burnt offering you wish to be, will lighten all difficulties for you, and His divine assistance will reward you richly for all the effort, with special graces. Our dear Mother Prioress sends you friendly greetings and wishes you everything good, abundant blessings, and blessed peace in your new calling. In response to your wish, she encloses a sample of our habit goods, with the address of the supplier. The price of a meter is 7 mark and 30 cents.

Special greetings from Reverend Mother Sub-prioress. She is presently in retreat. The Sisters also thank for your greetings and return them. The request for prayer to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is already being carried out according to your intention.

With the sincere wish that our gracious Lord will keep you in good health and grant His richest blessings for all undertakings, I remain, in union with the Most holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Your loving spiritual Mother,  
*Sister Mary Stanisla of Jesus*



HIMMELSPFORTEN  
MARCH 11, 1883

In order that Father Jordan might understand more fully her ideals concerning religious life, Mother Frances revealed to him in a letter of March 31, 1883, certain things about her past spiritual experiences in Carmel, especially her enlightenment and knowledge concerning the union of the active with the contemplative life. Father Jordan, being a practical man and, as a priest, knowing that persons can easily be deluded in matters of a mystical nature, became extremely cautious and had misgivings about her interior locutions. Yet he still hoped to bring about a solution to their differences.

In another letter, that of July 16, 1883, she revealed to Father Jordan her vision of the arching of Mt. Carmel and Mt. Alverno, with St. Elias and St. Francis on their summits. She thereby wished to impress on him the necessity of the fusion of prayer and work.

Both prayer and work have received new sprouts in the course of centuries, which have frequently misrepresented the sublimity of the one and the necessity of the other. In the one Order one often fails to understand the prayer of work; in the other, the work of prayer. Prayer and work must go hand in hand and like twin sisters, strive to remedy the spiritual and social misery of mankind, teaching it again what it means to *pray and work*.

Father Jordan had meanwhile gone to Germany to confer with another lady, Miss Theresa von Wuellenweber, who was a member of the First Degree of his originally proposed Society. She was the daughter of Baron von Wuellenweber and Elizabeth LaFort, born in Castle Myllendonk in 1833 in Rhineland, Germany, and educated as one befitting her rank. Her missionary vocation was awakened during a retreat given by Father Philip Mehlen, S.J., by the words, "Young women may also be called to a missionary apostolate." Being informed that in Germany there was no religious congregation of women dedicated to missionary life, she

tried various religious orders; but not finding the object of her desires, she procured an abandoned Benedictine monastery in Neuwerk, hoping that others would join in teaching and caring for orphans. However, because of the Kulturkampf in Germany, the project did not prosper.

Then there fell into her hands the magazine "The Missionary," the official organ of Jordan's Catholic (then known as Apostolic) Teaching Society. This was it! She felt that she had found her rightful place. She donated her Neuwerk convent to the Society, hoping to establish a women's branch there, and affiliated herself with the Society by making perpetual vows into the hands of Father Jordan, May 31, 1883. The name she took was Mary Theresa of the Apostles.

Upon his return from Germany, Father Jordan asked Mother Frances to write a rule of life, as up to this time the Sisters had no written rule. Knowing of her experience in religious life, both in active and in contemplative life, he thought she would be in the best position to draft the rule. They had discussed its fundamental outline; but here again, basic differences became evident, as they had heretofore. He desired the rule to be an asset to the promotion of his missionary project, while she, drawing upon her long and often unpleasant experiences of religious life, occasioned by laxity and the failure of living according to the precepts of the gospel, desired complete self-denial in order to bring about a renewal of the true Franciscan spirit. She therefore requested to be left free for nine days during the month of June, for vigils, prayer, and penance, so that the Divine Heart of Jesus would send her help, light, and peace. Sister Scholastica reports the following:

For eight days Ven. Mother Foundress secluded herself entirely, and we two made a retreat. On the eighth day Ven. Mother Foundress called us, showed us the rules, and read them to us. We prayed the *Te Deum* and then went to recreation. Again we went to the chapel, which was only a simple room with a small altar, as you know. To our consternation and that of our spiritual mother, we saw tiny pieces of paper

in the room. Mother Foundress said, "The enemy has done this." It was impossible that any human being could have done this evil deed. We called Father Jordan so that he could see the work of the enemy. He was shocked just as we were, gave new paper and blessed it so that the enemy could not destroy it a second time. Again we kept strict silence for eight days and persevered in prayer. Ven. Mother Foundress rewrote the rules.<sup>15</sup>

Mother Frances sent a copy of this second draft to Father Jordan on July 12 with the remark, "In regard to the regulations, my Reverend Father, which were sent to you, I say only one thing, that with the exception of those concerning conduct in choir, at prayer, and toward superiors, which was taken from the regulations of the Carmel, all else was written as I perceived in hours of deep insight into the decadent condition of religious Orders, to be willed by God and as not being practiced by a great many who have consecrated themselves to the service of God."

This rule of life, having as a basis the original rule for St. Clare, and although emphasizing poverty and austerity of life, did not permit extraordinary penances such as wearing a hair shirt and using the discipline or scourge, practices to which Sister Agnes, the former Sabina Schmausser, was very much inclined, and who left in the summer of 1883. Mother Frances, who objected to practices of this kind which wound the body, had asked Father Jordan to confiscate those instruments of penance because Sister Agnes was so stubbornly attached to them.

The rule was to be rather a means of animating the souls of the Sisters with greater love of God and neighbor. It aimed at fostering a close union with God, not merely by formal prayer but in daily activity, thereby uniting the apostolate of teaching and caring for the sick and the poor with contemplative prayer, witnessing to the words of St. Paul that no man is sanctified by the deeds the law prescribes but by faith in Jesus Christ, so that Christ may live in us (Gal. 2:16).

The norms which Mother Frances wrote in 1883 became the basis of the later constitutions of the Sisters of the Sorrowful

Mother. Time and circumstances have naturally changed externals and tempered their rigor, but their spirit remains enshrined in the revised constitutions enjoined by Vatican II, and is to lead to holiness of life no less in our day than a century ago.

Because of her singular graces and supernatural gifts, Mother Frances found it difficult to find a spiritual director. She therefore asked for Father Bonaventure Luethen as her spiritual guide, knowing that Father Jordan had doubts about God's guidance in her regard. He must also have had the same doubts about her ability to manage in material needs, especially in regard to her too rigorous fasts, for she answered in a letter of September, 1883: "You have doubts about God's guidance concerning me and therefore you also doubt whether I understand how to guide the Sisters in their physical necessities." She reminded him of her former superiorship and that Sister Agnes had left because of her exaggerated penances. She offered to relinquish the care of money and material goods to one of the other Sisters so that she could be free from worry over the household for six months; and she assured him that never had she applied the same measure in the spiritual life to her subjects which she was using for herself, since what the Lord demands of an individual soul may not be applied to others.

As new postulants were expected in October, Mother Frances asked Father Jordan and Father Luethen to draw up an investiture ceremony for the young women, as well as a daily order for their mode of life.

One of the new postulants who was to arrive on October 3, 1883, was Elizabeth Ankenbrand, who later became Mother M. Johanna, the successor of Mother Frances as superior general. From the account which she wrote in obedience in 1890, we learn of her childhood, youth, and early convent years.

Elizabeth Ankenbrand was born in Mechenried, Bavaria, on November 10, 1858. At an early age, both her mother and her aunt instructed her in the truths of our holy faith and taught her how to live a pious life in union with Jesus. Grace favored the

development of love of Christ within her, and she advanced rapidly in interior union with Him.

In spite of the fact that they were pious people, the members of her family did not wish that she enter a convent, especially a cloistered order. Religious conditions in Germany were chaotic during the *Kulturkampf* as already stated, and entering a convent was an uncertain move. Elizabeth was therefore sent to a hotel to learn the art of cooking. Because of her longing for a church, which she could not attend during her stay at the hotel, and also her longing for religious life, she shed many a tear. This was interpreted as homesickness by others, and for this reason her family moved her after three weeks.

The new pastor of her home town informed her that his spiritual brother in the seminary<sup>16</sup> needed a working girl who would prefer a rather quiet type of life. To her delight there was a large church adjacent to the seminary, St. Aloysius Church, which had at one time belonged to the Jesuits. Things worked out better there for her spiritual life; she could attend Mass and visit the church on Sunday afternoons, and pray the Way of the Cross if she so desired. After two years, the director of the seminary, Father Ferdinand von Schloer, was transferred to Würzburg to the *Königlichen Adeligen Julianum*, a select boarding school for boys of aristocratic families, and he asked the cook and Elizabeth to transfer there also.

During her stay at Würzburg, Elizabeth led a penitential and very spiritual and interior life, praying many hours during the night when her duties and daily work prevented it during the day. When her confessor was transferred and Father Cyprian came to take his place, she became his penitent. He seemed to read her very soul and told her to be very faithful to the inspirations of grace.

One morning, the cook went to the Marian Institute on an errand. The superior of the Institute (Mother Frances, at that time known as Sister Angela) inquired about the young ladies working for the Reverend Director and about the frequency of their reception of the sacraments. She seemed to be well pleased

and upon hearing that they, like her, also went to the Kppele, asked the cook to pray for her intentions.

A visiting priest also told of the wonderful things that had been accomplished at the Marian Institute through the intercession of St. Joseph. Whenever money was low, the superior had a Mass said in his honor, and help came from where one least expected it. She had built a beautiful chapel shrine to St. Joseph with just the alms that came in.

Elizabeth had a feeling of having known this superior, but she had never seen her. One morning, while she was busy in the kitchen, she received word that the good superior of the Marian Institute had left there and gone to the Carmel of *Himmelspforten* for good. Everyone was saddened at her departure, for all loved her for her humility and charity to the poor.

Elizabeth's yearning for the cloister now increased. Together with some of the other working girls she went to Mass and Holy Communion at *Himmelspforten*. Often she visited the shrine of the Sorrowful Mother at the Kppele, giving alms from her own meager savings to the poor people she met there.

One day a lady came to the Julianum, announcing herself as superior general, and asked if there were any young ladies who wished to go to the convent. Upon being introduced to Elizabeth, she immediately told her she would take her to Neuwerk, where she could live like a nun and work without a habit. This, Elizabeth felt, must surely be the beginning of a call to God's plan, but the matron of the institution cautioned her not to speak to the lady, who was none other than Thecla Bayer. When she left again for Neuwerk, the cook accompanied her to the depot and on the way divulged the secrets of Elizabeth's intimacy with Christ. Thecla promptly changed her mind about leaving then and went first to Father Cyprian.

Not long after, Elizabeth received a letter from Thecla, telling her to be ready to join her. When she showed the letter to Father Cyprian, he discouraged her, saying he did not think this person capable of establishing a new Order. She was going to Bamberg,

he knew, to travel to Rome with another pious person. Who this pious person was, Elizabeth did not know at the time but was to learn later. It was Mother Frances.

Elizabeth waited for another letter but none came. Some time after, Thecla returned to the institution and said that she had become ill before starting for Rome and had been forbidden to make any trip of great length. It was from another pious lady, who was expecting to enter the new foundation in Rome, that Elizabeth learned that the foundress was the former superior of the Marian Institute in Würzburg. Then, indeed, her hopes of entering ran high. When a letter from Mother Frances informed Father Cyprian to tell her she had been accepted and should prepare herself at once to travel, she was firmly convinced the Lord was calling her then. Months passed by, however, before she was able to leave for Rome.

Elizabeth's mother and brother had always been opposed to her entering religious life; so were others. She was accused of being disobedient and unwilling to take counsel from priests and others. Shortly before Easter she received a letter saying that her mother was coming to Würzburg. Elizabeth prayed, hoping that God would set things straight. She was to meet her at the train station. How surprised she was when she heard her mother say, "Oh, I had no rest day or night any more. I thought to myself, I will not always be here. How sad it would be if you would stand at my deathbed and say, 'Mother, I am not happy because you would not let me enter the convent.'" Her brother also now gave his consent to her vocation and agreed not to put any obstacle in her way.

On August 19, 1883, Elizabeth wrote to Father Jordan for permission to enter the Catholic Teaching Society. Trusting fully in the Lord that she would be accepted, she purchased the necessary articles and packed her trunk. On the day she sent off her trunk, she received the notice to be ready to travel at any hour; she would be notified by postcard as to the exact date. She reached Rome on October 3, and received the habit on October 6, as Father Jordan and Mother Frances accepted her long period of

preparation and intense spiritual life in the world as a period of postulancy. Since the Society was only in its formation period, no specified time had been set for postulancy or novitiate. Elizabeth became Sister M. Johanna of the Five Wounds, and was now at the mature age of twenty-four years.<sup>17</sup>

The other postulants who came to Rome a few days later, that is, on October 6, were Louise Kley, who became Sister M. Clara; Elizabeth Dierks, Sister M. Josepha; and Theresa Gries, who became Sister M. Columba. These three received the habit on November 21, feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

After much prayer and hesitation, Mother Frances agreed to undertake the training of the novices in the novitiate. She felt herself quite incapable of this office, as she would have to teach humility more by her example than by exhortation and instruction. In her great humility she said again and again that she was incapable of leading other souls and being their guide. Already in a letter of April 16, 1883, she had said, "The Lord gave me talent for teaching and training, but the fear of being considered talented or of becoming vain and self-complacent in the position of teacher, prompted me already years ago to put aside all signs of higher education and choose common housework instead."

Next to the Holy Family, Mother Frances presented as patrons for the novices St. Aloysius and St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi. She assured Father Jordan that she would be guided by obedience and train the young novices in the spirit of the founder of the Catholic Teaching Society, for since her seventeenth year she had been guided by grace, and in all important matters she had let herself be directed solely by obedience.

In the training of the novices, she endeavored to instruct them both by word and by an edifying example in all phases of spiritual life, humility, self-denial, practice of the vows, but especially in prayer. She knew well how to restrain with prudence any excesses, as in the case of Sister Sabina, and to direct all their youthful energies to their great goal of fervent love and union with Christ. Even during recreation periods she endeavored to direct



in a simple and enjoyable manner the hearts and minds of these young girls into spiritual channels, ever mindful of the words of St. Paul, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the honor of God" (I Cor. 10:31). They, in turn, saw in her the perfect model of a true religious; if she inadvertently committed a fault, she humbly confessed it before them, much to their own amazement and edification.

In 1880 Pope Leo XIII was advocating a return to Franciscan ideals as a means of renewal in the Church, and urged all members of society to join the Third Order Secular of St. Francis. The "Missionary" carried an article to this effect and Father Jordan evidently favored the idea. He obtained from the minister general of the Franciscans the faculties for admitting the members of both sexes of his Society into the Third Order Secular of St. Francis. Mother Frances was received into this Order on November 26, 1883, and professed a year later; the other members, subsequently. Rejoicing that Father Jordan had indeed come to love the Franciscan spirit, Mother Frances wrote to him on December 5:

I shall make every effort while in the novitiate of the Third Order to bring about, with God, the reform of the Franciscan Order. This shall not be done through me, however, no, but by a man on whom the Lord must bestow such graces and privileges that will make him worthy, like his model, the saint of Assisi, to teach his sons and daughters poverty and discipline, combined with active love of neighbor.

A Christmas letter to Father Jordan, written December 23, 1883, closed with the wish that he might be completely transformed into the likeness of the poor and lowly Christ. Her prayer that morning before the crib of the Savior in Santa Maria Maggiore was this:

Lord, bring honor to Your Church. Grant that her bridal gown appear in the brilliance of new colors, the colors of humility and poverty. Awaken for Yourself children who have the courage to follow You in despising the world and in practicing strict renunciation of the world, who become little in order to appear great before You, who abase them-

selves to further Your honor. May this prayer of mine be heard, and so too this one: May the Lord give my Superior a full measure of grace so that he may want nothing, wish nothing but poverty and self-contempt.

Father Jordan could not agree with Mother Frances on the subject of total abstinence from meat. He feared that a strenuous missionary career could not be built upon the principles of an austere penitential Order, and that the rules would necessarily have to take into consideration the problematic conditions of the country in which the missionaries worked. In a letter of November 12, 1883, she discussed this problem: "To both Sisters M. Scholastica and Johanna, I communicated my grief caused by Your Reverence's being prejudiced against continual abstinence."

The words "Why do the disciples of John fast . . . ?" (Luke 5:33) may ring in our ears as we read the above words. What is the relationship between fasting and *metanoia*, or spiritual renewal, which Mother Frances was so ardently striving to attain in the new Society? Pope John Paul II answers this question. He defines fasting as detachment from a "consumer attitude" by which man uses material goods to satisfy the senses, the excitement he derives from the momentary pleasure, multiplicity of sensations . . . .<sup>18</sup> Yet, for what reason do we deprive ourselves of something? Again Pope John Paul II gives us the answer:

Man is a being composed of body and soul. Some modern writers present this composite structure of man in the form of layers, and they speak, for example, of exterior layers on the surface of our personality, contrasting them with the layers in depth. Our life seems to be divided into such layers and takes place through them. While the superficial layers are bound up with our sensuality, the deep layers are an expression, on the contrary, of man's spirituality, that is, of conscious will, reflection, conscience, the capacity of living superior values.

. . . . Man develops regularly when the deeper layers of his personality find sufficient expression, when the sphere of his interests and aspirations is not limited just to the exterior and superficial layers, connected with human sensuality. To facilitate such a development, we must sometimes

deliberately detach ourselves from what serves to satisfy sensuality, that is, from those exterior, superficial layers. Therefore we must renounce everything that "nourishes" them.<sup>19</sup>

Drawing upon her past experience of laxity and effeminacy in religious life, Mother Frances closed her letter of November 12, 1883, with the following paragraph:

Why must such a miserable woman, so poor in virtue, raise her voice in this holy cause? Why does the Lord employ poor and uneducated means for an initial work? My Father, forbid all austerities, but then give me the assurance that I have no responsibility if, after ten years, the Lord permits a forcible change in your work. I submit with all the strength of my will to the decree given by you, and God will further lead a soul that He has guided until now, even in the midst of softness and consumption of meat.

About the middle of November, 1883, Sister Johanna fell ill. The symptoms which manifested themselves were swelling of the glands, painful, violent headaches, and soon a paralysis which seized her so that she could not open her mouth to take any solid food. The doctor, finding it difficult to diagnose her illness, said he could do nothing for her. Mother Frances resorted to prayer but feared nevertheless that she would have to resign herself to God's will, if He would claim this good Sister. Everyone knew that Sister Johanna was a God-loving soul, and during her illness, several persons, including Father Jordan who himself attested to it, sensed a strong odor of violets upon entering her sickroom.

As her condition grew worse, Sister Johanna was permitted to make her profession of vows on December 3, both in the Third Order of St. Francis and in the Second Order of the Society, in such a manner, however, that if she recovered, she would not be bound by them.<sup>20</sup>

The little community was attending a solemn novena in preparation for Christmas at Santa Maria Traspontina for her, and prayed earnestly to the Divine Child Jesus for her recovery. Was it the power of prayer or her faith in holy obedience to her lawful superior that effected the astounding result? There are two con-

flicting reports as to her cure and recovery. In Father Jordan's official "Red Book" of entries we read: "On December 26, 1883, I commanded this sick Sister to rise in obedience, and she was miraculously cured." In her own narration of the event, Sister Johanna says it was Mother Frances who told her to rise and begin her daily work in the kitchen. She maintains, however, that it was the Infant Jesus who cured her. Although weak from her long illness and prolonged fast from solid food, she soon went about her daily work again, and on January 6, 1884, went with the other Sisters to the Church of Ara Coeli to thank God for this wonderful recovery.

A later entry of Father Jordan's reads: "In the month of February her progress in the way of perfection was wonderfully revealed to me. Certainly Johanna is pleasing to God."

The holy feast of Christmas, the first for the community, was drawing near. Mother Frances hoped and prayed that somehow, from somewhere, there would come some small donation to give the Sisters a little treat, that the sharp edge of their separation from homeland and its beautiful Christmas customs might not be so keenly felt. The little money they had was needed for just the bare necessities as food, rent, and other essentials. All the same, Mother Frances kept a little for the poor who came to their door; they were never sent away empty-handed, even though the Sisters were poorer than the poor. She remembered her good St. Joseph on his journey to Bethlehem who was also in dire straits, and prayed. And as the moon rose over the city, and the first strains of *Stille Nacht* resounded in the little convent on Christmas Eve, there was a knock at the door, and there appeared a priest, who up to this time had not been well disposed toward them. Handing them a large bundle in which were wrapped oranges and peas, he said to them, "Here, eat enough for once!" Needless to say, they thanked him heartily, and he, in turn, thereafter often brought them fruit from his garden.<sup>21</sup>

The Community Chronicle relates that one day some Sisters went across the Piazza of St. Peter's and saw a poor man barefoot, although the weather was very cold that winter day. When they

returned to the convent, they told Mother Frances about it. At once they had to return and look for the poor man, and having found him, they brought him to the convent. Since the Sisters had previously received a little wine as a gift, Mother Frances immediately prepared some hot wine to give him with some bread and the last seven lire they had in the house. The Sisters were a bit disconcerted over this seeming lack of prudence, but Mother Frances assured them that Divine Providence would restore it a hundredfold. Before evening, a letter containing 700 lire was delivered from a lady with whom they had no acquaintance whatever.

Mother Frances' trust in Divine Providence was often rewarded by striking occurrences. One day Sister Johanna, who was working in the kitchen, reported that there were no more charcoals to light the fire for the evening meal. Mother Frances told her to make a fire in obedience; God would provide. From a few little chips or shavings of wood and a few nut-sized coals left over from the noon cooking, Sister Johanna cooked the evening meal, and to her astonishment afterward, there was as much left of the coals as there was in the beginning.

In mid-December, 1883, a young Italian lady, Agnes Pechinino, entered the Society. Being an emotional character, she was inclined to indulge in exaggerated penances. One day, she cut off her beautiful long hair, and without a moment's hesitation, burned it in the dining room, the flame almost reaching to the ceiling. By this act, she felt, she was offering God a most acceptable sacrifice. Later she also burned the sleeve of a habit so badly that half of it had to be removed. But Mother Frances cautioned patience, because Sister Veronica, as she was called after her investiture in the habit, had a good will. Nonetheless, she caused considerable disturbance in the novitiate, and Mother Frances suffered much on her account.

There were now seven Sisters besides Mother Frances in the little community. Funds were low, as only two Sisters earned something by typesetting for the missionary printing activities of

the Fathers of the Catholic Teaching Society. Besides, Mother Frances considered it of paramount importance that the first year be devoted to the study and practice of the spiritual life. Knowing of the generosity and good will of the people of her homeland, she determined to send two Sisters to solicit alms there. She was much concerned about the fatigue and dangers of this undertaking, but she did not approve of soliciting donations in various periodicals, feeling that personal encounter would avail more, both in securing charitable donations and in recruiting prospective postulants.

In the beginning of January, 1884, therefore, Sisters M. Scholastica and M. Columba were sent to Bavaria in the neighborhood of Würzburg for this necessary enterprise. During their stay in Würzburg, they were guests at *Himmelspforten*, the Carmelite convent. The prioress, Mother Anna, was very glad to see the spiritual daughters of the foundress who once was their novice, Sister Petra. "Oh, yes," she said, "it really was God who led your spiritual mother away from us. We all loved her very much and were edified by her God-centered behavior, her holy zeal in the pursuit of virtues." The prioress and the novice mistress then admonished the two Sisters to honor their Mother Foundress highly as she was a saintly soul, called by God to great things. The Sisters also called upon the Bishop of Würzburg as well as the Bishop of Augsburg. Both were at first quite disconcerted about Mother Frances, as she had not been dispensed from her vows in the Maria Stern convent. Upon hearing, however, how happy the Sisters were in Rome, they became friendly, gave them their blessing and an alms, and sent Mother Frances their blessing and greetings.

Sister Scholastica's little eleven-year-old sister, Kunigunda Demer, had come to Rome with the three candidates from Bavaria on October 6, 1883. She was determined to be a Sister some day, although she had not yet made her First Holy Communion. On the day after her arrival, the Sisters attended a special celebration in honor of the holy rosary in St. Peter's Basilica, the occasion being the addition of the invocation, "Queen of the Most Holy

Rosary, pray for us," to the Litany of Loreto. Being small of stature, Kunigunda could see nothing of Pope Leo XIII, who performed the ceremony. One of the Swiss Guards, noticing her predicament, hoisted her up to one of the high balcony seats draped with green carpet, and there sat "Kunele," as she was called, not in a sycamore tree, but as a little queen on a throne!

On January 6, 1884, Kunigunda made her First Holy Communion, and we read in a letter of Mother Frances to Father Jordan the petition to let her wear the little white collar of a candidate on that day. She was confirmed on September 9, 1884, by Archbishop Sallna. On December 31, of that same year, she received the habit and was received into the novitiate. Records show that she made her profession of vows, but because of illness was sent to recuperate to her parents' home in Bamberg, where she died in 1887, ending her brief but holy life.

With the increasing number of postulants and novices, the little convent of three rooms at Borgo Nuovo No. 151 was entirely too small, and a larger dwelling at Vicolo del Falco, No. 18, was obtained. At first only the lower floor, with the later possibility of the second, was rented.

For the moving day Mother Frances could not be in Rome, as she had to go to Germany on a business trip, the nature of which we do not know. She had instructed the Sisters to first take the Holy Family picture, which she had brought from home and which had held the place of honor in the first improvised convent chapel, and place it in the new dwelling between two lighted candles. Accordingly, on Ash Wednesday, Sister Veronica carried her precious burden of the picture and two candles, and arriving there, the first one to enter the new dwelling, found nothing but a layer of thick dust on the stone floor. Following the directions of Mother Frances unquestioningly, she knelt down in the dust, which she felt quite appropriate for Ash Wednesday, laid the picture on the floor, lit the candles, and began to pray. When the others arrived with their bundles of poor belongings and saw the picture of simplicity which Sister Veronica presented, they were reminded of Juniper, one of the first followers of St. Francis,

who could not be outdone in obedience. After a hearty laugh, they joined her in prayer, asking God's blessing on this, their new dwelling. They now prepared one of the rooms for a chapel and put the venerated picture of the Holy Family upon a little altar. Next, they put in order their few belongings, their beds and straw mattresses and blankets over boards which served as beds.

The Sisters at this time did not as yet have a real chapel nor did they have the Blessed Sacrament in their convent. Father Jordan came to say Mass for them whenever he found it possible, and the improvised chapel served as workroom and refectory as well. The church closest to their new dwelling at Vicolo del Falco No. 18 was the Franciscan Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, dedicated especially to Our Lady because of a painting brought from the Holy Land in 1586. The Sisters often visited the great and venerated sanctuaries of Rome, particularly St. Peter's Basilica. During the first two years, the weather permitting, they visited the seven principal churches of Rome almost every week. Those pilgrimages also became penitential, for the Sisters usually fasted until their return, sometimes late in the day.

One morning when the Sisters returned from church, they found that the house had been broken into and almost everything portable had disappeared. Even the straw mattresses had been emptied and the straw lay around in heaps. Sister Scholastica, however, reports that the sack of potatoes which a man had brought them, in answer, it seemed, to her longing for this rare commodity in Italy, was left untouched by the burglars and was in the same place where it had been before. Mother Frances' only words were, "Blessed be the name of the Lord! Some one has broken into the house." She called the police, who discovered that the lock had been opened with a wax impression of the key.

Mother Frances herself seldom accompanied the pilgrimages to the churches; she usually stayed at home and did the necessary work. Yet, as we know, she was the soul of prayer; her very being was built on prayer. She arose early in the morning, usually at 4:30, praying and meditating until it was time for Holy Mass.



She spent many hours of the night, almost whole nights, as Sister Scholastica reports, in prayer during the trials of the foundation period.

First and foremost was her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Since Christ had so powerfully drawn her to Himself even before her First Holy Communion, her whole being was locked in intimate union with the "Prisoner of Love." Holy Mass and Holy Communion were to Mother Frances something ineffable. When she spoke to the young Sisters of Christ's love in the Eucharist, her voice became soft with emotion and her face became transfigured. Had she not walked in love with Christ since her First Holy Communion?

She was most concerned about the cleanliness of everything in and around the chapel, and as far as limited means would permit, desired to have the best she could afford for divine service. Her ardent desire and fondest dream was to have at some future day, in some house of the community, perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

No less fervent was her love for our Blessed Lady. She wrote to Father Jordan on March 28, 1883: "Let us look at the Mother of the Seven Dolors. She stood beneath the cross. She stood erect. That which should have crushed her held her upright — the wounds and the blood of Jesus." In July she wrote to him, "May the bride of the Holy Spirit, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, guide my pen. . . ."

Of her love for St. Joseph we have already heard; in the Marian Institute in Würzburg, she attributed all her success to him. "The holy Trio," she once wrote, "possess my whole heart." Is it any wonder that the picture of the Holy Family had the place of honor in the little convent?

While the first year of the foundation was devoted entirely to laying the foundation of the community on a spiritual basis, it now became necessary to become involved somewhat in the apostolate. This was the foremost aim of the founder, Father Jordan, as well as the realization of the purpose for which Mother Frances knew she had been called from Carmel, *to unite the active with the*

*contemplative life*. On January 1, 1884, Father Jordan informed Sister Theresa von Wuellenweber in Neuwerk: "This year, God willing, we shall let the Sisters here also begin the apostolate for poor, abandoned girls." "The Missionary" reported on November 30 on the activity of the "*Asilo Infantile*" in Rome, and in a letter to Father Luethen on August 15, 1884, Father Jordan wrote, "The Sisters are working in the service of the sick day and night, wherever they have been and will be called."

Differences of opinion between Father Jordan and Mother Frances became more and more evident, and their divergent views caused growing tension in regard to the rule, especially as it pertained to food, clothing, formation, and active life combined with contemplation. From her letter of January 28, 1884, we gather that he could no longer agree with the form of life as she had envisioned and planned it. She begged him to put aside human wisdom and embrace the folly of the cross, reminding him that there would be no special service rendered to God or to the Church by simply adding to the many "easy" congregations, which she says, "make no effort to go beyond the life of ordinary good people in regard to food, rest, and renunciation."

Almost one hundred years later Vatican Council II threw a glance backward at all the existing congregations in the Church and reminded the members living in them today of their obligation of total dedication to God and selfless zeal for souls.

Hence, the more ardently they unite themselves to Christ through self-surrender involving their entire lives, the more vigorous becomes the life of the Church and the more abundantly her apostolate bears fruit (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 1).

Mother Frances continued to urge Father Jordan to be, not a "reed blown by the wind," but a "messenger to prepare the way of the Lord."

The controversy here is not merely about ideals or accidentals; rather, it deals with the "charism" of the founder. A charism is a grace given to someone for the benefit of others. The charism of the founder flows into the members of the congregation through

the special rule and constitutions which he or she, by the grace of God, has provided for them, and by the venerable traditions of the Order.

Father Jordan wrote in 1878, "O Lord, in a time so corrupt as this, extraordinary means are necessary in order with Thy grace to call a halt to sin. . . . Pass in review the individual nations, countries, and languages of the globe and see how much there is to be done for the glory of God and the salvation of the neighbor!"<sup>22</sup>

On January 11, 1885, Father Jordan wrote to Sister Theresa, "Apostolate! Apostolate! Let us leave the future to the Lord. Let us press forward with our own sanctification and that of our fellow men." Father Jordan's charism, without doubt, is as he himself says, "the spread, defense and quickening of the holy Catholic faith."

Mother Frances, on the contrary, saw in the combination of the contemplative with the apostolic life the perfect fruition of the religious life. Vatican II, in the "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life," instructs those who profess the evangelical counsels: ". . . in every circumstance they aim to develop a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col. 3:3). Such dedication gives rise and urgency to the love of one's neighbor for the world's salvation and the upbuilding of the Church" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 6).

Mother Frances clearly states her own charism:

Soon after I had the above-mentioned communication and was approaching the Sacred Heart, asking why I was called to Carmel, I received the answer: "To unite the active life with the contemplative." At the same time it became clear to me that the Lord would call me to a foundation which would aspire to contemplation closely united with activity.

\* \* \*

My understanding in regard to the new foundation is that the holy Rule given by St. Francis to St. Clare be practiced again in its original form with the addition of the norms of St. Teresa. From the Rule as well as from the Norms, the things relating purely to the contemplative life will be omitted.<sup>23</sup>

A decisive moment would have to come for the conflict to be resolved.

Another matter weighing heavily upon the mind of Mother Frances was the question regarding the status of her vows, which still bound her to the *Maria Stern* Community. Father Jordan, being aware of this problem, was apparently seeking a solution when he was in Würzburg in June, 1883. The following month, on July 29, Mother Frances wrote a full account of her situation to him, stating the fact that Father Cyprian had failed to remind her of the necessity of being released from her vows in the *Maria Stern* Convent.

The Lord permitted that it did not occur to Rev. Father Cyprian to advise me that I must first free myself from the bond which still held me to *Maria Stern* Convent, and you also, Reverend Father, considered the matter more or less closed. . . . I do not believe that I shall have to return to the *Stern* Convent. . . . I thank God that this struggle has come at this time when I am firm in obedience and striving with you, my Reverend Father, toward one goal.

This letter was forwarded to Father Jordan by Father Luethen. On August 6, 1883, Father Jordan addressed a letter to Bishop Pancratius, informing him of the state of affairs.

Toward September of 1883, the bishop was giving some thought to a penal dismissal of Sister Angela from the Community of *Maria Stern* but gradually abandoned the thought since he realized that Father Jordan would not be allowed to use, for the purpose of his Society, one who had been dismissed in punishment. On March 20, 1884, Father Jordan suggested to the bishop the possibility of dispensation to clear up the matter. In his reply on May 4, the bishop wrote:

I am prepared to take steps in this direction although I must admit to myself that such a procedure will be difficult to reconcile with canonical regulations, since requests for a dispensation from vows should be presented only with the understanding that the petitioner still resides in that convent from which she plans to return to the world after receiving

the dispensation. What makes me more inclined toward the procuring of an apostolic dispensation is the circumstance stated in your letter that Streitel already wears the religious habit and wishes to be admitted to profession at the appointed time.

In order that I may proceed according to your wish, however, Streitel herself must submit to me such a petition, giving the reasons why she again left the Convent of *Himmelsporten* in the Diocese of Würzburg. The petition must also indicate who on the part of the Church approved her departure from the designated convent; who permitted her to wear secular clothes; and finally, whether all this was done *bona fide* [in good faith] on her part. You will then have the kindness, Reverend Father, to forward the written petition to me, with a testimonial concerning the conduct of Streitel up to the present time. In addition, include a detailed report giving the kind of activity in which Streitel is engaged or will be engaged. And since you speak of a religious congregation, in which the one referred to will be incorporated through profession, you must also inform me as to the name of this congregation and whether it is approved by the Apostolic See. As soon as I have received the necessary information I shall address myself without delay to the Apostolic See in behalf of Miss Streitel.<sup>24</sup>

On May 10, 1884, Mother Frances herself, according to the bishop's instructions, presented her petition through Father Jordan, requesting release from her vows made in her former congregation of Franciscan Sisters of *Maria Stern*. Therewith the matter remained in abeyance until the following December.

It was now high time for the two members, Theresa von Wuellenweber and Ursula Rabis, living in Neuwerk, to come to Rome, to adjust themselves to community life and imbibe the spirit of the Society. There was concern in the little community in Rome whether or not a person of such affluence and noble extraction as Baroness von Wuellenweber could accept the austerity of the life based on the Rule of St. Francis, and the rigors it necessarily entailed. Mother Frances may have had misgivings, but she was sincere in her desire to have them join the community in Rome as soon as possible, fearing that more delay would cause

a divisive spirit. She had already written to Father Jordan on December 22, 1883:

I protest before God that I am free of every prejudice concerning Miss von Wuellenweber. I should more readily see her admitted to our convent today than the two Roman Sisters, although I respect both of them highly and shall gladly welcome them into a strictly ordered convent household. The only thing I fear, concerning both the Sisters from Neuwerk and also Miss Wittmann in Munich, is that the longer these souls are kept away from the Sisters of the Society which recent times have seen arise, the more will a divisive spirit reign between the two communities, and the world would be right in firmly censuring this. And in the future the rift which had opened between the two could scarcely be bridged. Now, when the Lord is manifestly imparting His grace to the last of your spiritual daughters in a special manner, when unity of sentiment and striving for perfection reign, when obedience and love of poverty hold sway, it can be easy for your first daughters to associate themselves with the last ones and walk the same ways with them without their and our having to feel that Providence has shown that *their ways were not always ours*.

In a formal letter on New Year's Day, 1884, Father Jordan requested Sister Theresa to come to Rome with her companion.

*Pax Jesu*

ROME  
JANUARY 1, 1884

Beloved daughter in Christ,

First of all I wish you and your fellow Sisters, as well as all beloved in Christ a Happy New Year, many graces from God, and great progress in perfection. At the same time I should like to express my opinion as appears to me to be the will of God. It is my wish that this year, your venerable self and also Sister Rabis should come to Rome at least for a few months, as I consider this absolutely necessary even for the sake of uniformity. During this time both of you would receive the habit and gradually accustom yourselves to community life. As far as your health is concerned, it would be no hindrance if you had to make some exceptions in consideration of it. You yourself will realize it is neces-

sary that the Sisters who are to work for the same end should know one another and have a truly sisterly relation. I know your spirit of sacrifice and consider you called to something higher; but you will scarcely attain to this if you always stay in Neuwerk. Think this over before God, the God who became poor even to the extent of the crib and the cross. He will tell you what to do. Great things as a rule arise only when they begin as the God-Man began His work in poverty. In comparison, consider St. Clare, St. Colette, St. Theresa. It grieves me that you must wait so long before coming into the right pursuit. God will help. Let us, however, bring Him our will as sacrifice.

Please write me very soon when you will be able to come. There are eight Sisters here at present who have received the holy habit and about seven are ready to enter. This year, God willing, we shall let the Sisters begin the apostolate for poor girls.

God bless and comfort you, beloved daughter in Christ, and make you ever more like Him.

Awaiting an early reply, I remain, respectfully,

*John M. Francis of the Cross*<sup>25</sup>

Sister Theresa wondered who would take charge of her establishment during her and her companion's absence, and so Father Jordan arranged to have the two Sisters, Stanisla Schoen and Clara Kley, go down to Neuwerk and remain there for the time being. Mother Frances wrote to the local pastor in Neuwerk, Msgr. Ludwig von Essen, on May 10, 1884, about a possible establishment in that city:

Would Your Reverence and Honor not find it timely and salutary if we were to send to Prussia Sisters trained in the Society here in the novitiate, to work in the service of the sick and in the sphere of education, in a garb that is kept simple, without any conspicuous style? As soon as the Lord shall have removed the scourge of the Kulturkampf from this land, they would appear as regular religious in garb also. . . . It will be possible to make three good, trained Sisters available for this.

Msgr. von Essen sent this letter to the diocesan chancery, with his opinion: "As long as the female members of the Catholic

Teaching Society do not form a congregation recognized by the Church, they have, to be sure, only private vows." He received a negative reply. This communication was forwarded to Father Jordan, but he either did not receive it or did not respond to it. Accordingly, on July 4, 1884, Sister Theresa informed Msgr. von Essen that she had received a letter from Father Jordan, stating that two Sisters would arrive without religious garb. The next day, Sisters Clara Kley and Stanisla Schoen arrived in Neuwerk.

On July 7 they presented themselves to the pastor, who, on the same day, had received a letter from Father Jordan, saying he would send both of them as private individuals, so that Sisters Theresa and Ursula could come to the novitiate in Rome. Imagine the surprise which Msgr. von Essen indicated to his dean! He expressed the supposition that the two newcomers might have been dispensed by Father Jordan, and were not religious at all!

Sisters Theresa and Ursula left Neuwerk on July 22, en route to Rome. They arrived there only toward the end of the month because of a quarantine caused by the cholera in France. Father Jordan had warned them to expect the poorest of living conditions, and Sister Theresa tried, indeed, to fit into the pattern but could not adjust herself to the severe discipline and the austerity she found in the little convent. She could not see that this was the spirit of the founder as she had learned it from him. It was clear to her that she was called to a missionary, not a contemplative way of life. Without any animosity, she left after three weeks, still feeling very closely identified with Father Jordan and what she understood to be his spirit. She wrote, "I will cling as much as I can more and more to the congregation. Oh, I would rather die than leave it and the founder . . . !" <sup>26</sup>

Arriving back in Neuwerk, Sister Theresa and Sister Ursula found a new candidate, Barbara Mayer, who later went to join the group in Rome. The two Sisters pursued their way of life as they had perceived it according to the spirit of Father Jordan. He now decided to send Mother Frances and Sister Scholastica to Neuwerk, for what exact reason we do not know. They arrived there on September 18, 1884. We soon hear that Sister Clara



Kley left the Society on October 4 and returned to her home. Whether the conflict she perceived unnerved her or whether she had no real vocation, is uncertain. These were times that "tried men's souls." After her departure, Sisters Theresa and Ursula lived in community with the Sisters from Rome; but there is no evidence as to which rule they lived by. Sister M. Scholastica informs us in her "Notes" that Msgr. von Essen advised them to return to Rome at once, for Sister Theresa von Wuellenweber was not in harmony with their views.

In the meantime, on October 19, 1884, Father Jordan wrote to Sister Theresa, saying he had "suffered much, very much already, because of Neuwerk and the occurrences there." What he was referring to we can only conjecture; he closes with the sentence, "I did not act from an evil motive."<sup>27</sup>

Mother Frances and Sister Stanisla left Neuwerk for Rome on October 22, followed on October 29 by Sister Scholastica and the candidate Barbara. Mother Frances had stopped in Bamberg on the return trip and sent the following letter of thanks to Sister Theresa and Sister Ursula:

*JMJ!!!*

Highly respected Sister,

A most sincere "God reward you" for all that I as well as our Sisters have received of your kindness. Heaven will hear the prayers and will grant graces and blessings for you, respected one, and for Sister Ursula, to whom I send cordial greetings.

On her return journey, Sister M. Scholastica met the Father Provincial of the men and women Carmelites of *Himmelsporten*, and he received her very paternally and took special care of her. The Lord is good and His mercy endures forever!

Because I was absent from here for four days, my letter of thanks to you was delayed, but I hope that you will not judge me on account of this, respected Sister. In sentiment and before God, I have always been filled with gratitude for the benefactions received from you.

One of these days I shall travel to the Eternal City and see there what the Lord desires.

May I extend my respectful compliments to the Most Reverend Prelate. Recommending you, beloved Sister in God, and the good Sister Ursula to the Holy Trinity, and sincerely begging you to remember me to God, I am gratefully and respectfully yours,

Your devoted fellow Sister  
*M. Frances of the Cross.*

BAMBERG  
NOVEMBER 5, 1884

Events kept moving in the little community in Rome. Mother Frances had ardently desired to have the Blessed Sacrament in the convent which had been rented and so Father Jordan agreed, early in November, to have a house chapel in the Sisters' residence.<sup>28</sup> Already a year previously, Mother Frances had asked Father Jordan if he would not permit that as soon as Our Lord had taken His place in their midst, one Sister would always stand guard with Him day and night. Every hour another Sister would take her place before the Eucharistic Savior and each hour would be dedicated to a mystery of the Incarnate Love, for instance, the Precious Blood, the Sacred Heart, the Wounds of the Savior, etc. In this manner she already envisioned a perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. She herself had been keeping a holy hour from eleven to twelve o'clock during the night before the first Friday of each month, and had requested of Father Jordan that a Sister join her in this hour of reparation. Her desire, however, to have a house chapel was not realized until after the rescript for this was issued January 7, 1885.

As many postulants were entering the new community in 1884, and the apostolate in which they were engaged did not fully provide a means of sustenance, it became necessary again to find means of support from generous benefactors. Accordingly, the Sisters petitioned the Cardinal Vicar in Rome for permission to solicit alms for the motherhouse. Records show that between April and June, 1884, permissions were also obtained from local governments in the districts of Swabia, Württemberg, and Baden.

Furthermore a trip to France was undertaken by Sisters Angela

and Veronica, in August or in early September, 1884. In France, they were guests of the Sisters of Christian Doctrine at 109, rue Saint-Dizier, Nancy, France. The first we hear of them on their tour is in a letter from the mother general, Sister Philippe, signed by Sister Lucie and dated September 17, 1884, in which she informs Father Jordan that the two "excellent religious" are sick, away from home in a strange country. She assures him that they are being given the best of care in true charity, as members of their own congregation, and that Sister Angela is better but that "the good Lord will call Sister Veronica in a short time. The disease of the chest progresses, very slowly."<sup>29</sup>

The next we hear is from another letter to Father Jordan in November, written on the 8th of that month by the assistant general, Sister M. Emilienne Pierron:

Your good Sisters speak of their superiors with such great respect and affectionate veneration that we consider ourselves happy to be able to enter into relationship with them and make their circumstances less painful.

It is with a heart filled with deep sorrow that I write to you, my Reverend Father, since I will bring you sorrow in letting you know the exact situation of the two excellent religious women whom Divine Providence sent to our house and of the disease which afflicts them. The physician who is taking care of them with great devotion hurt us deeply when he stated that Sister M. Veronica has consumption; but we were far from expecting that Sister Angela will soon be as sick as she. The latter, although suffering somewhat, was apparently holding up.

During the night on Wednesday or Thursday she had a violent hemorrhage, which was repeated several times in spite of the medicine and treatment given right away.

I tell you this with great sorrow, my Reverend Father. It is a dangerous disease, and her little companion is not better off. However, they are resigned, joyful and edifying. "To heaven," both of them cried out, and also "Deo gratias"; and they tried to sing Hosanna, the Magnificat and the Te Deum. From such beautiful and saintly souls the good Lord has founded your Society, my Reverend Father, and what generous victims has He chosen among its members!

We thank you for sending them among us, where we are happy to have given them care and to have received in exchange the good edification which they spread among others.

Our Reverend Mother is absent for several days. She has been very touched by the last letter you addressed to her. We are grateful for your remembrance of us and our congregation before God. I am asking you to please continue to do so, and I beg you, Reverend Father, to accept our expression of sorrow and the homage of my deep respect.

One can imagine the dismay, coupled with anxiety and worry, that must have befallen both Father Jordan and Mother Frances at these communications. Was the Lord already exacting "a pleasing sacrifice" of his most dear children who had learned to imitate him and "walk in his love?" They must have spent many an hour in earnest and pleading prayer for these two young Sisters in their helpless situation. Father Jordan, sensing their inmost feelings, wrote and asked them whether or not they would like to have him or Mother Frances come to their assistance in a foreign country, or if they would be able to undertake the journey home. Sister Angela, who was up and able to be about again, replied on November 17 that although this would give them much joy and happiness, they could not expect such an attention because of the poverty of the community. She hoped, since they were both feeling better, that they would be able to get back safely, relying on the intercession of their many prayers. Earlier she had mentioned, in a letter of November 3, that they were very well cared for, both in body and soul; that a certain Monsignor Lorin, who was secretary to the Most Reverend Bishop and spoke Italian, came to hear the confession of Sister Veronica, visited them often, and sent cordial greetings to Father Jordan.

Father Jordan accordingly sent Sister Scholastica to France in December, 1884, to take charge of the situation and bring the two Sisters back to Rome within, perhaps, a few weeks. Sister Scholastica has glowing words for the kindness and charity of the Sisters of Christian Doctrine. She undertook the task of soliciting alms according to an itinerary given her by the superior of the

French community. On February 9, 1885, she wrote that she had completed her task of soliciting alms and hoped to begin the return journey with the Sisters the next day, on February 10.

Statistics show that in the early days of the community, during the year 1884, twenty-eight young women were received into the novitiate, seven made temporary vows, and ten made their final profession. While the institute was still a private foundation, the length of postulancy, novitiate, and temporary profession were not well defined; sometimes only a few months elapsed between the first and final profession. Twenty-one Sisters were also professed in the Third Order of St. Francis. Only two members withdrew from the community, namely Sister Clara Kley and an Italian novice.

Before the close of 1884, the Lord exacted "a pleasing sacrifice" in the persons of two young Sisters, Antonia Brehm and Coletta Lautenschlaeger, who died edifying deaths.

"Holiness is achieved when, effortlessly, or rather by habit and grace acquired by effort, a man or woman thinks, acts, reacts as Christ would, revealing his charity in all circumstances to all God's creatures."<sup>30</sup> Mother Frances was striving to advance more and more in this way of holiness. On December 8, 1884, exactly two years after she had formulated her decision in Carmel to strike out in faith on her uncharted path, she made the vow "constantly and in all things to choose and to do what is most perfect, be it ever so difficult for fallen nature." She placed this vow in the hands of Father Jordan, her superior; and he added in his own handwriting, "Valid until Christmas, twelve o'clock, 1884. Father Jordan can always dispense."

As to the vows which still bound Mother Frances (Sister Angela) to the *Maria Stern* convent, Bishop Pancratius finally, after months of delay, sent his reply to Father Jordan on December 12, 1884. He explained that the long interval of inaction on his part was caused by the knowledge of the difficulty which lay ahead in obtaining a dispensation in this case, as there had been a series of errors against canon law in the whole proceedings. Father Cyprian should have, in the first place, advised her to

seek a dispensation from the vows binding her to *Maria Stern* before she left the Carmel. The fact that she left without a release from her vows, although in good faith, not knowing that she needed a dispensation, could have entailed penal dismissal from her former Order; she could not, then, have been able to function as one in authority, or perhaps even be received into another Order. As Bishop of Augsburg, Pancratius was reluctant to resort to this solution of the release from her vows and therefore he advised the following:

Angela should remain in your Society as a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, and since she is no longer living in the convent of her former religious house, she should at least consider herself strictly bound to it through the vow of perpetual chastity. She should then disclose her situation to her confessor and explain to him that she will continue to live faithfully according to the Rule of St. Francis and faithfully observe the vow of chastity in particular. Thereupon she should submit a petition to her confessor requesting that he obtain the dispensation of the vows she had at the same time pronounced in her former convent, the simple vows of poverty and obedience, taken, however, as perpetual vows.

As a situation involving *in foro Confessionali* [matter of conscience and confession], the confessor will apply to the Sacred Penitentiary, *tecto nomine* [without disclosing the person's name], and will certainly receive the indicated dispensation.<sup>31</sup>

In February, 1885, we may presume, Father Jordan sent the following petition to His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII, through the Cardinal Vicar, Lucido Maria Parocchi:

May Your Holiness be pleased to grant to the undersigned, permission that Sister Angela Streitel, a member of *Maria Stern* in Augsburg, may now be received into the Sisterhood of the Catholic Teaching Society, by dispensing with the vows she previously made there. She has lived and dwelt for the past two years as a Sister in the Catholic Teaching Society.<sup>32</sup>

On February 9, 1885, Bishop Pancratius wrote to Father Jordan that he would send the statement of his request regarding the dispensation of Sister Angela's vows to his Roman agent, Father George Jacquemin, the next day, to be forwarded to the respective Congregation. The statement was received and directed to the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars.<sup>33</sup>

Some information is necessary at this point to understand the role of Cardinal Parocchi. The Cardinal Vicar is the vicar general of the pope as bishop of Rome, for the spiritual administration of the city and its surrounding district, properly known as *Vicarius Urbis*. In the course of time the vicar acquired not only the position and authority of a vicar general but also that of a real ordinary, including all the authority of the latter office. All matters concerning the monasteries of Rome and their inmates pertained to a special commission in the vicariate composed of about eight members and under the direction of the vicar. The authority of the vicar did not cease with the pope who appointed him.<sup>34</sup>

Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi, who had been Archbishop of Bologna, was made Vicar General to Pope Leo XIII in March, 1884. That he was an outstanding and very influential man in the Church is attested by the late Pope John XXIII, who, as a student for the priesthood in Rome, was present at his funeral. He writes of him:

Cardinal Parocchi was the sort of figure we very rarely come across in the records of the Church. The bare mention of his name was enough to silence those who accused the Church of ignorance; before him even unbelievers reverently bowed their heads, and men of science faltered when they had to speak in his presence. His erudition extended to every field of knowledge; at some time or other every learned scholar had met him. Equal to his love for the truth and for everything good and beautiful was his burning, unquenchable love for the Church and the Pope. Opinions may differ about Cardinal Parocchi's political views: I know that some malicious insinuations have been made — but no one will ever question his courage and his enthusiastic

loyalty to Church and Pope, even when as always happens to generous souls, his fortitude was severely tried.<sup>35</sup>

Since Cardinal Parocchi was rather new in the Vatican, his first reaction was to request a thorough investigation of the Sisters and most probably of Father Jordan also. This request is found in the form of a note in the Cardinal's own hand on the last page of Father Jordan's petition. It reads: "Let the secretary of the Vicar go to the place, conduct a strict visitation and report back. February 23, 1885." There are no documents of the visitation existing, but we may conclude that it took place at the end of February or the beginning of March.

Father Jordan was much concerned as to what might be the ultimate decision pending in regard to the status of the vows which still bound Mother Frances to *Maria Stern*, and so he determined to keep in close touch with Sister Theresa von Wuellenweber in Neuwerk. At any rate, she was a member of his First Order, and as such, was most intimately united to the Society. He therefore wrote to her, hoping that he would be able to call her again to the holy city of Rome very soon. On April 3, 1885, he informed her she would most probably have to come to Rome, while some Sisters would go to Neuwerk as private individuals. There is no record that this trip materialized. In his letter he also wrote: "The Sisters' habit is now black, no longer gray." At the same time he admonished her not to lose sight of the real apostolate. "The children, the poor, and the sick are the favorites of Jesus!!!" he wrote.

As on many former occasions, so also on May 2, 1885, Mother Frances had a premonition that something of importance was to happen on the following day, May 3. It was the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, which was celebrated in May in the liturgical calendar prior to the changes in the liturgy enjoined by Vatican II. Father George Jacquemin visited the Sisters in Vicolo del Falco for the first time on May 3, 1885, in accordance with the desire of the Cardinal Vicar, for the reason that a Sister had become ill.<sup>36</sup> We now know it was a case of mental illness. In



her "Notes" Sister Scholastica says: "A sudden, terrible darkness of soul came upon a Sister, the case of Sister M. Catherine." During the night between May 3 and 4, in a fit of insanity, diagnosed by the doctor as *monomania-suicidal*, she jumped from a window, but the attempt at suicide failed. Some weeks later she was taken to her paternal home in Bavaria, where she died, still mentally afflicted, on June 13.

The final outcome regarding Mother Frances' former vows was reached when Cardinal Parocchi, in an audience with Pope Leo XIII on May 9, received permission to absolve from all ecclesiastical censures, as had been requested in the petition for her. He appointed a confessor to impart the absolution and decreed as follows:

We grant the requested transfer under the condition that the petitioner, her profession still binding, must repeat the novitiate according to canon law, whereupon she may make a new profession at the proper time, with the observance of all regulations. Dowry and support must also be provided. This decree must be fulfilled within six months.<sup>37</sup>

The decree was signed by the Cardinal Vicar on June 1, 1885. It must have been forwarded to Mother Frances immediately, as she resigned her office of superior on June 1, 1885, which act and date she later corroborated in a document of August 16 of that year.

According to the directions of Bishop Pancratius, all these matters were to be considered within the sacramental forum and could not, therefore, be discussed. Thus, Father Jordan, without being able to explain his actions, appointed Sister Stanisla as superior. On June 13 she accepted the office under compulsion and retained it until the following August 16. The Sisters, therefore, did not know why Sister Stanisla was superior and thought that Father Jordan had deposed Mother Frances. In her letter of resignation which she addressed to the Cardinal Vicar already on June 20, Sister Stanisla remarked, "Our Superior has deposed our Mother Superior. . . ."

Truly, the Sisters were like sheep without a shepherd!

It must have been a painful situation, indeed, for Father Jordan, who could not act differently in regard to Mother Frances because of the decree. She, in turn, suffered immeasurably because of the existing state of affairs. With St. Paul she could say, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross . . ." (Gal. 2:20). In her deep sorrow she wrote these lines to Msgr. De Waal on July 4, 1885:

Our Reverend Superior is suffering very much. Today he read the Holy Mass with great effort and now he will scarcely be able to do us this favor for some time. Our Sisters are deeply stricken and grapple in prayer and fasting for their mother. The mother herself stands there upheld inwardly and outwardly by grace alone, for her natural strength is gone. M. Angela is ill, and so also a Sister in Germany. Everything in the house appears paralyzed and inert. . . . This situation has lasted for weeks. The Sisters have no instruction in the spiritual life.

Her last letter to Father Jordan reveals her agony of soul:

*JMJ!!!*

Reverend Father:

Why are the designs of God fulfilled in such a terrible manner?! I suffer immeasurably. You in such suffering, M. Stanisla completely broken, M. Angela entirely unable to instruct, M. Johanna sick in Germany. Those around me are souls bowed down with grief. Added to this I must see that which was built up in pain and sorrow, with trouble and prayer, moving toward ruin. My Reverend Father, grace alone supports me. In the natural way nothing called strength or courage to live exists in me. My God, forsake me not, for Your hand alone it is which, although it strikes, nevertheless keeps me from the depths of despondence.

Please let me know today how you, Reverend Father, are faring. Sincerely commending you to the Lord, I beg you to forgive me all by which I have offended you. In pain and suffering, I am, Reverend Father,

Your spiritual daughter,  
*M. Frances of the Cross*

ROME, JULY 4, 1885.

Father Jordan, being equally saddened and disturbed by the sad situation in the house, already on July 7 requested the reinstatement of Mother Frances as superior of the community, but his request was not granted. He also requested that Father Luethen be appointed confessor for the Sisters; again, this request was denied him.

Sister Angela Popp, one of the first members, who, it seems, was put in charge of the novitiate, addressed herself to Msgr. De Waal in a letter on July 13, saying, ". . . through the circumstances which have already been so distressing to you, there have crept into the novitiate, as no surprise to you, many a disorder. This, of course, is no wonder when the Sisters have no one to lead them."

Msgr. Anton De Waal was at this time rector of the Collegio Teutonico, commonly known as Campo Santo. It was a national foundation for the Catholics of Austria and Germany, in which archeological studies and church history could be pursued. Connected with the college was the church, Santa Maria della Pietà, a hospice, and a cemetery. The whole complex on the north side of St. Peter's in Rome was in the locality which was part of the ancient *Circus Vaticanus*, where great numbers of Christians suffered death by order of Nero. Friends of the foundation in Germany endowed it with free scholarships and made possible the acceptance of resident students.

Since Father Jordan had been one of those resident students, he was well acquainted with Msgr. De Waal, and we know from the correspondence of Mother Frances and Sister Angela that the Sisters felt free to address themselves to him.

Sister Angela also mentioned in her July 13 letter that because of an "English child" it would be good to have Sister Scholastica recalled to Rome from Germany, as there was no other Sister in Rome competent to deal with the situation. She asked Msgr. De Waal to speak to Father Jordan about the matter of Sister Scholastica's return, but very cautiously, so as to "keep him in good humor."

On July 20, Sister Angela wrote to the Monsignor about the

result of a visit of a certain archbishop who had twice visited the Cardinal Vicar and had advised the Sisters to visit His Eminence personally, to thank him for his benevolence toward them. The Sisters did so, but as the Cardinal Vicar was not feeling well, he sent word to them that he had already given instructions that day which would be for the best interests of the Sisters.

On July 24, 1885, Father Jacquemin, with whom the Sisters were already acquainted as confessor in the Church of S. Maria dell' Anima, was appointed by the Cardinal Vicar as their ordinary confessor and his special delegate or plenipotentiary.

On this same day, Sister Angela wrote to Msgr. De Waal:

This morning I went with another Sister to His Reverence, Monsignor Dr. Jacquemin, and begged him to please help in the matter known to you and to take the necessary steps. I hope that he will do his part as he sees right before God. As to the confessional, he said he would see to it himself. Your Reverence, I cannot sufficiently express the exterior and interior suffering which I have felt more than ever the past few days for both of my beloved superiors as well as for my dear fellow Sisters. It seems to me as if the Cross is being exalted more from day to day.

Sister M. Scholastica will come one of these days. . . .  
. . . As you well know, I cannot speak personally with you as I have no further permission from Reverend Father, who, for the past few days is very disinclined toward me, even though I have done nothing to him. I suffer terribly because of this cross. On the other hand, I see the Reverend Mother weeping for sorrow, not knowing how to help herself and able to hold up supported only by grace.

On July 25, Father Jordan received the vows of Sister Elia Hennemann. It is most probable that he did not know of the appointment of Father Jacquemin as confessor and plenipotentiary of the Sisters the day before.

The last three postulants who were admitted to the community during this time by Father Jordan were Rosina Eichfelder, who later became Sister M. Agnes; Barbara Niegel, Sister M. Anna, and Margaret Hornung, Sister M. Joachim. Other than these, as

Sister M. Agnes later recalled, no more young ladies could be admitted during this crucial time, as there was even a question as to whether the small community would continue to exist or be dissolved. She tells of their great anxiety and their fervent prayers, coupled with sacrifice, for the continuation of their community:

It was during this time that we left the motherhouse every morning at five o'clock, walked to the Church of St. Augustine, attended Holy Mass, received Holy Communion, and when this was over, we went to the altar of the miraculous statue in this church, knelt on the stone floor, and there we prayed devoutly with all our heart. With hands uplifted imploringly to the dear Mother of God, we told her, "We will not leave you until you have heard us." We kept on kneeling and praying until we went home, reaching there at two o'clock, still with empty stomachs. The ladies who saw us praying so long before our Blessed Lady offered us chairs, but we did not accept them. We wanted to do penance so that our prayers would be heard. Sister Stanisla was our leader and always prayed with us. She also wanted order restored in our community.<sup>38</sup>

It was about this time that Sister Scholastica returned from Schesslitz, Germany. Upon her return, she was informed by Father Jordan that she was now to obey Sister Stanisla, as she was the superior. Since he was not permitted to discuss the affair, he could not explain the reason. She herself tells us what happened:

The same day when I arrived in Rome, Father Jordan explained to me that I was now to obey Sister Stanisla, as she was now the superior. The Sisters told me the same and said definitely that they would not accept her. "We will not let them take our Mother away from us!" I spoke to Sister Stanisla, asking her how she could dare, in her incompetence, to accept this office. She answered irritably, "Somebody has to be superior, and Venerable Mother may not be it any more."

Then I went to Dr. Jacquemin to ask his advice, and he told me to wait a few days and see. In the evening, Father Jordan came, called for me and told me to leave the con-

vent. I told him very curtly, "I did not come to Rome for your sake and I will not leave for your sake. God called me to Venerable Mother. I recognized her plainly."<sup>39</sup>

Father Jordan may have asked her to leave if she did not recognize Sister Stanisla as superior, as he considered Sister Scholastica to be the soul of the opposition.

Sister Scholastica went to Father Jacquemin, who himself went to the Cardinal Vicar and then sent Sister Scholastica to him. She related in her poor Italian, as she tells us, all that she knew of the events which had transpired in the community during the last two years, and asked him to help them in their difficulties and regulate their affairs.

On August 16, 1885, Mother Frances again resigned her office, formally and in writing, as requested by the Cardinal Vicar. She laid it into the hands of the delegate of the Cardinal Vicar, Father Jacquemin; it was witnessed by Sisters Stanisla and Angela. On this same day, Sister Stanisla also resigned her office, which she had held under compulsion. She also placed it into the hands of the delegate of the Cardinal Vicar, with all the rights and duties which had been imposed upon her on June 13. It was witnessed by Sisters Clara and Aloysia.

In the afternoon, Father Jacquemin assembled the Sisters in Via del Falco No. 18 and announced that, as the Cardinal Vicar's delegate, he appointed Sister Scholastica as legal superior under the conditions set forth by the Cardinal himself, namely, that the actual spiritual direction be returned to Mother Frances, and all the Sisters could submit to her in matters of spiritual guidance; in her administration as legal superior, Sister Scholastica would be dependent upon the advice and approval of Mother Frances.

That the Cardinal Vicar personally directed Father Jacquemin to take in hand and regulate the difficulties of the Sisters was attested by Msgr. Jacquemin himself to Father John M. Thill, chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield, Wisconsin, in the summer of 1915, when asked how he came to be associated with the Sisters: "There were difficulties with the Sisters; then the

Cardinal Vicar called me and told me I should go and bring order into the situation."<sup>40</sup>

Such a procedure is nothing new in the history of the Church or of religious orders. In times of crises, the Church has the right and the duty to send its delegates to ascertain the cause of the difficulties and help remedy the situation.

Peace and order were thus again restored to the little community in Via del Falco, and all the Sisters were well satisfied with the arrangement. The Cardinal Vicar, however, was considering other plans for the community.

Father Jordan was in Germany from August 6 to September 15 on official business for the Society, during which time some of these events transpired. He visited Schesslitz and there met Sister Johanna Ankenbrand, from whom he learned that a new superior, Sister Scholastica, had been appointed by Father Jacquemin according to the intention of the Cardinal Vicar. To his dismay he also heard from a letter which Sister Johanna had received from Rome, that the Church was considering a separation and was concerned with new rules and the position of Father Jordan as director of the Sisters.

Armed with this alarming news, he returned to Rome.

Before Father Jordan's departure to Germany, Msgr. De Waal, rector of Campo Santo, had taken upon himself the temporal and material affairs of the Sisters at Father Jordan's request and upon the command of the Cardinal Vicar, and he agreed to say Mass at the convent during Father Jordan's absence. Father Jordan had even taken steps to rent a house for the Sisters, entrusting the matter to Msgr. De Waal during his absence. The house he had in view was behind the sacristy of St. Peter's.

On September 17, 1885, Father Jacquemin was appointed spiritual director of the Sisters. He accepted this office only with much hesitation when the Cardinal Vicar first manifested his intentions to him in this regard, not wishing to usurp another's position. That he did so only in obedience to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, is confirmed in his farewell letter to the Sisters, in which he says: "It was the good God Himself who, in the

year 1885, entrusted me with the care of the Sisters. He did this through His highest representative."<sup>41</sup> He clearly recognized in this command the holy will of God.

On September 17 also, the institute was formally named "Sisters of Charity of the Sorrowful Mother."

After Father Jordan's return from Germany on September 15, he received a letter dated September 18, from Msgr. De Waal, in which the latter stated that he considered his task with the Sisters completed, and that Father Jordan should again take over his work. We presume that neither Msgr. De Waal nor Father Jordan had heard of the appointment of Father Jacquemin as spiritual director the day before. Moreover, later in September, Father Jordan wrote to Msgr. De Waal, asking for a reduction in the funeral expenses of Sister M. Sebastiana Griebel, who had died August 18, because the Society could not afford the expense. This was his last official act as director of the Sisters.

Another concern of the Cardinal Vicar was the rule of the institute. Father Jacquemin, as canonist, had been entrusted by him with the delicate task of examining the regulations then in force in the institute, and of bringing them into harmony with the current Church legislation concerning the religious life, on the basis of the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, as approved by Pope Leo X. In the "Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of the Sorrowful Mother," 1885, he adhered as closely as possible to the contents of Mother Frances' "Norms" of 1883 and the "Rule and General Norms" published by the Catholic Teaching Society in 1884, so that the ideals of Mother Frances regarding poverty and self-denial and other characteristics of her spirit remain unchanged. They were expressed in closer conformity with the phraseology customarily found in such religious documents. Material explaining the organization of the institute, known as Sisters of Charity of the Sorrowful Mother, canon law regulations, and other necessary specifics lacking in the former documents were added. Certain details, particularly on food and meals, were modified, no doubt on consultation with the foundress, while other sections of the "Norms" dealing with table prayer, conduct at table, and



various other directives were omitted but later included in the book of "Convent Customs."

This new constitution of 1885 was written in Latin and then translated into German for the Sisters. On October 6, 1885, Father Jacquemin assembled the Sisters and read to them the German translation. In the *Liber Documentorum*, the community's Book of Documents, we find the following entry in his handwriting:

The First Episcopal Approbation of the Constitutions  
Given by Cardinal Vicar Lucidus Maria Parocchi  
October 4, 1885

I, the undersigned, do hereby testify and witness that on October 6, 1885, I went to the Convent of the Sisters of Charity of the Sorrowful Mother twice. Having called the Sisters together in the refectory and invoking the Holy Spirit, I promulgated the constitutions approved by His Eminence the Cardinal Vicar of Rome on October 4, feast of St. Francis of Assisi, according to the authority and by the mandate of the same Eminent Cardinal; I read them through in German, explaining them from beginning to end, with the approval in writing of the Most Eminent Vicar.

GIVEN AT ROME, OCTOBER 6, 1885.

*G. Jacquemin, delegate of the  
Most Eminent Cardinal Vicar for  
the Congregation of the Sisters  
of Charity of the Sorrowful  
Mother.*<sup>42</sup>

On October 8, at the request of Sister Scholastica in the interest of the community, Msgr. De Waal was appointed administrator of temporal affairs of the community on a temporary basis.

As doubts had arisen in the minds of many of the Sisters regarding the validity of their vows, partly because of the duration of their novitiate and interval before perpetual profession, Pope Leo XIII, on October 10, dissolved the vows of all the Sisters who had previously made vows in the Catholic Teaching Society, and later enabled them to make new ones in accordance with all the canonical prescriptions.

On October 12, His Holiness declared the community an autonomous religious institute, as stated in the Acts of the Roman Vicariate.

The Cardinal Vicar had evidently sensed and noticed the great disparity between the views of Father Jordan and Mother Frances, and because of their differences of opinion, felt that it would be in the best interests of each, if the Sisters' congregation would become an autonomous group.

It was the opinion of some that Father Jordan was not competent to handle the matter and did not know how to direct a congregation of Sisters.<sup>43</sup> Father Thill, who verbally contacted Msgr. Jacquemin in 1915, quotes the latter as saying that Father Jordan was "unpractical." These opinions, however, are in no way meant to imply any kind of censure of Father Jordan. Father Luethen, in 1910, received this statement concerning him from one of the original group, Sister Angela Popp, who had later joined the Trappists and was then known as Sister Sebastiana:

He constantly kept himself intact, was dignified, devout, maintained a wholly fatherly and respectful attitude towards the Sisters as well as towards the one who was the Superior at that time; he also manifested an heroic humility, which shone forth in his whole being and behavior. The Very Reverend Father Jordan was so concerned about the Sisters that he thought one should give the Sisters meat to eat; he also thought that the climatic conditions were to blame for the sicknesses of the Sisters.<sup>44</sup>

We do not know to what extent Father Jordan was acquainted with the events which had transpired. From his diary we learn that he endeavored to retain the direction of the Sisters through the intervention of Archbishop Rota, canon of St. Peter's, his friend and brilliant contributor to the Society's Italian publications. He had asked the Cardinal Vicar for an interview but was told he could not be received until he had withdrawn from the Sisters. Why he was denied this interview, or why he was not consulted earlier for an explanation remains an unanswered question.<sup>45</sup>

On October 12, Father Jordan was asked to make a statement,

declaring his resignation as director of the Sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society. He had not done so up to this time for the simple reason that he did not know exactly what he was expected to declare. Upon the instruction of the Cardinal Vicar, he presented the following declaration on October 13, 1885:

I am ready to accept the direction of Your Eminence, which has been communicated to me by the secretary, that is, I shall no longer concern myself with the Institute of the Sisters.

With this act, the bond between Father Jordan and the Sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society was severed.

In the German chronology of the life and work of Father Jordan, compiled by Father Alois Filthaut, S.D.S., in 1978, we read the following *Note*:

As a final ending to the drama, the following notation is given by Msgr. Jacquemin:

*Oct. 13.* It is understandable that Father Jordan, by all means, especially through the intervention of Archbishop Msgr. Rota, Canon of St. Peter's, endeavored to keep the direction of the Sisters, and therefore the Cardinal Vicar laid the whole matter before the Holy Father; the above-stated result was the consequence.<sup>46</sup>

It is certain that the juridical separation is to be placed on October 13, 1885, when Father Jordan signed the requested declaration of renunciation. On October 14, 1885, he gave over all deposited monies, writings, and books "completely, conscientiously, and exactly" according to a rescript in the Salvatorian archives, dated October 15, 1885, and signed by Sister M. Bernard Mayer, *Ökonomin*. "With that, the juridically completed separation was actually sealed."<sup>47</sup>

"God knows," wrote Father Jordan, "what I have suffered." He rarely spoke about this painful episode of his life. His only comment was "God knows what it was all good for." God does, indeed, sometimes test his faithful servants and friends to the near limits of their endurance. The witty comment of St. Teresa

of Avila comes to mind, when she asked the Lord why He had dealt with her so harshly. Receiving the answer, "This is the way I treat all my friends," Teresa replied, "Ah, Lord, it is no wonder you have so few!"

We wonder why God required such painful episodes to occur in the lives of these people in order to effect His designs. Father Jordan agreed in all faith, "God knows what it was all good for." In God's designs it was as if two meteors had crossed each other's path, each one giving off its own light and heat, and in the fleeting moment of their meeting, one affecting the course of the other.

Father Jordan's views swung from a society to a religious order; his later constitutions show more detail on poverty than the original ones, and he took the religious name of "John Francis of the Cross," all indications of his change of ideas through his association with Mother Frances Streitel. She, on her part, owed it to Father Jordan that the foundation of which she was now the head was initiated by him. Through her association with him, the practices of austerity were tempered and imbued with a spirit of moderation.

To both these heroic souls we owe our unfeigned admiration and our deepest debt of gratitude for the work they accomplished for the Church, and for their example of selfless dedication to God and man.



## CHAPTER 5

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### **Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother**



Sister M. Kiliana Jakubowsky, we learn of Sister M. Stanisla's statement that Father Jacquemin attributed the reason for the title to the many sufferings the community had to undergo in the first years of its foundation. In this same letter Mother Wendelina made this statement: "Mother Frances and the Sisters favored St. Joseph, but since the Sorrowful Mother stood higher in rank, they readily acceded the place of honor to her. Msgr. G. Jacquemin promoted the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother and first of all purchased a small image of her with a sword piercing her heart."

The most conclusive evidence, recently brought to the writer's attention, for the choice of name is found in the "Diary" of Msgr. De Waal. Under date of April 5, 1901, he writes:

The Sisters who have their name from the Pietá in the Church of the Campo Santo, have been closely associated with our house since their founding. Together with Msgr. Jacquemin, I was their director for some length of time. The house in which they live belonged to the Campo Santo; there, for a long time, I celebrated Mass on Sunday, preached and gave retreats.<sup>1</sup>

What we definitely know concerning the title of the community is that when Father Jacquemin was appointed spiritual director, the little congregation was named "Sisters of Charity of the Sorrowful Mother." Eventually the title became just "Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother."

Father Jacquemin, who by this time had entered quite dramatically into the life and work of Mother Frances Streitel, was a native of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, having been born there on March 27, 1853, in the town of Echternach, in a valley between the Ardennes hills and the Sauer River which separates the country from the German Rhineland. Echternach owes its origin to a Benedictine Abbey, which the English-born St. Willibrord, the "Apostle of the Frisians," established there in 698, bringing Irish and Anglo-Saxon spiritual and cultural life into continental Europe. The mortal remains of the saint, who died there on November 7, 739, are enclosed in an artistic sarcoph-



agus of white marble and venerated in the papal basilica which stands on the site of the former abbatial church.

George was the eighth of eleven children of good Catholic parents, who considered it their first duty to give their children not only a Christian education but also a better academic background than they themselves had secured in times of political upheaval. Three of the sons, therefore, including George, received advanced education and attended the Athenaeum in Luxemburg.

After concluding his studies of the classics, George was admitted to the diocesan seminary, and on August 24, 1877, was ordained a priest in the Cathedral of Luxemburg by Bishop Nicholas Adames. He celebrated his first Holy Mass in Echternach, at the main altar of the Basilica of St. Willibrord, two days after his ordination. Because of his outstanding qualities as a student, morally, academically, and spiritually, the bishop chose him as beneficiary of a scholarship to the German College attached to the German National Church "Santa Maria dell' Anima" in Rome. In return for board and room, he was expected to do chaplain's work in the church itself, such as hearing confessions, celebrating Mass, and performing other liturgical functions, at the same time taking courses at the Gregorian University leading to the academic degree in canon law. He obtained his doctorate in canon law on July 29, 1879.

Bishop Adames of Luxemburg and his successor, Bishop Koppes, allowed Doctor Jacquemin to remain in Rome, appointing him as their agent for their diocesan affairs in the Roman Curia. Soon after this, some German and other European bishops entrusted him with the same position.

When Pope Leo XIII recommended and urged in 1880 the study of scholastic philosophy, especially that of St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor Jacquemin resumed his studies, this time at the former College of St. Thomas Aquinas, where he obtained his doctorates in theology and philosophy in 1883 and 1884 respectively.

Some time before 1883, by agreement between the Cardinal Secretary of State and the Austrian government, he was appointed

to the vacant position of National Consistorial Clerk of the Sacred College for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, where he had to be on duty every three years at all of the pope's consistories with his cardinals, and during this time, residence in Rome was obligatory. He continued his residence at the Anima, and for several years was its vice-rector; for life, he was a member of its board of administrators.

Because of his great priestly dignity, approachableness, and humility, he was greatly esteemed by the rector of the Anima, Msgr. Karl Jaenig, and possessed not only his confidence but also that of all his fellow chaplain students. In the church he distinguished himself by his zeal for the splendor of the sacred functions and for the ministry of the confessional. He soon came to be known as an excellent spiritual guide, and it was here that on one of the last days of February, 1883, his first contact with Amalia Streitel took place. She soon brought with her the first members of the foundation, who all recognized in Doctor Jacquemin an experienced spiritual director as well as a kind and understanding confessor.

The first official mention that we have of his association with the Sisters is in a letter from Bishop Pancratius to Father Jordan on February 9, 1885, in which he said he would send the statement of Father Jordan's request regarding the dispensation of Sister Angela's vows to his Roman agent, Father Jacquemin, to be forwarded to the respective Congregation. The next reference, as we have seen, was his first visit to the convent of the Sisters in Vicolo del Falco on May 3, 1885, in accordance with the desire of Cardinal Parocchi, for the reason that a Sister had become mentally ill. Then on July 24, there followed his appointment as confessor to the Sisters and as special delegate or plenipotentiary of the Cardinal Vicar; and on September 17, 1885, his appointment by Pope Leo XIII as spiritual director of the Sisters.

Now that the community was under the spiritual direction of so eminent a jurist as Dr. Jacquemin, and since more and more young women were applying for entrance into the community, organization in all fields was of greatest importance. One of the

prime requisites was a ceremonial for the rite of religious reception and religious profession. Father Jacquemin drew up a ceremonial in accordance with prevailing customs and the liturgical legislation in force at the time, inserting the pronouncing of vows into the liturgy of the Mass. This ceremonial, approved November 4, 1885, by the Cardinal Vicar, was in use, with some later minor alterations, until the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II gave new direction and form to religious institutes.

Because of the growing number of Sisters it became necessary to find another place of residence. Msgr. De Waal, as business administrator, rented for them on a temporary basis, December 1, 1885, the house No. 41 on Borgo Santo Spirito, at the left of the colonnades of St. Peter's Basilica. It was a solid stone structure, fifty feet in length and thirty-seven in depth, built on sloping ground, as were all the adjoining buildings. A year later it was acquired by the Campo Santo for a specific purpose. However, the lease had included an option for the Sisters to purchase the house, and when the lease expired in 1887, Msgr. Jacquemin, finding no other available building, claimed the right to purchase. The matter was finally settled when Msgr. De Waal, rector of the Campo Santo, signed the document transferring ownership for 22,000 lire on October 10; but not until November 19, after further difficulties, was the legal document signed before a notary. Years later there was danger of losing this hard-won edifice which served as motherhouse until 1925. Eventually the danger passed and the superior general, Mother Melania Eberth, was able to write in 1952: "Our house and all the adjoining houses up to the generalate of the Reverend Jesuit Fathers have been doomed to be torn down since 1912, to make the streets wider. The two wars and the ensuing lack of money have prevented it until now, to the greatest joy of all the Sisters."<sup>2</sup> The house, since 1925, has been a place for pilgrims who visit the sanctuaries of Rome, finding board and room, American and German style, at the tip of one of the encircling arms of the colonnades of St. Peter's Basilica.

To return now to the year 1885. On the day of moving into No. 41, there were thirty-six members in the community, and all

carried their belongings from Vicolo del Falco No. 18, over to Borgo Santo Spirito, No. 41, up the flight of 32 steps to the first floor. Only a few articles, too large to be carried, were transported by wagon. Msgr. De Waal dedicated the little chapel and donated the picture of the "Deposition from the Cross." Sister Angela, who was in Vienna soliciting alms at the time, wrote to him on December 2:

We are glad that our dear Sisters have already moved into the new house, and that you, Right Reverend Monsignor our spiritual father, have already said the first Holy Mass in the new chapel. [Father Jacquemin had not yet moved to his rooms in the convent.]<sup>3</sup>

Before the close of the year 1885, the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, had given permission on December 12 that Mother Frances might complete her novitiate before the expiration of the canonical year, and make her religious profession. Even the usual *scrutinium*, which meant that all the professed Sisters in the house were to decide by secret ballot whether or not the novice or Sister be admitted to profession, was to be omitted this time for her. On the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1886, Mother Frances pronounced her vows in canonical form for three years, together with a group of eighteen Sisters whose vows, made during the time of their association with the Catholic Teaching Society, had been dissolved by Pope Leo XIII because of doubt about their validity. How must the hearts of Mother Frances and the Sisters have quivered with emotion, and how must the little chapel room in Borgo Santo Spirito have reverberated with joy at the strains of "O Most Blessed Morning," as Father Jacquemin accepted the vows made for the first time by "Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother" in this, their new dwelling, so close to the Vicar of Christ! In the evening of that day, three postulants received the holy habit, given to them by Father Jacquemin. They became the future Sisters Agnes, Anna, and Joachim.

Two weeks later, on January 20, after interviewing each Sister separately, the Cardinal Vicar reinstated Mother Frances as su-

perior general of the community. To the great surprise of the Sisters, the Cardinal himself came to visit them on April 1, 1886, in their humble and scantily furnished abode. All the Sisters, with their spiritual mother, approached to kiss his ring. He inquired in the most fatherly manner as to the spiritual and material conditions in the convent, and then admonished all to cherish their rule and constitutions, striving thereby to advance in holiness, so that together with the Sorrowful Mother they might follow Jesus on the way of the cross, meditate on His sufferings, and increase in compassion and the spirit of sacrifice.

The Cardinal Vicar seems to have felt a special affinity toward the new Sisterhood, as he had taken great pains to assure its continuation in the Church.

On April 20, 1886, Dr. George Jacquemin was made a Privy Chamberlain Supernumerary of the Prefecture of the Apostolic Palaces. Thereafter he was entitled to be called Monsignor. On June 8 of the same year he was awarded the Cross of the Knights of the Order of Francis Joseph. This distinction may have been in recognition of his work for the Austrian and other German speaking Catholics in Rome.

Many favors were granted to the new Sisterhood at this time. Because of her great devotion to St. Joseph, Mother Frances petitioned the Cardinal Vicar to place the young community, by virtue of his authority and by means of a formal document, under the special patronage of this saint. The petition was granted through the following decree:

Since we ought to grow daily in devotion to St. Joseph, the most holy Patriarch, whom the Lord repays by honoring in many ways; and since too we would like to offer the patronage of the most powerful spouse of Mary to the Sisters, so that they might grow in devotion to the Virgin Mary according to the rules of their own Institute, and that they might also be devoted to the Catholic upbringing of girls, — attentive to their pleas, we decree and designate St. Joseph, foster father of Christ, as heavenly Patron for the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, in the hope they will conform their lives to the example of this great Protector, and that

through his most efficacious intercession they might obtain the precious graces needed to attain eternal happiness after a religious life well lived.<sup>4</sup>

GIVEN AT THE VICARIATE  
OCTOBER 31, 1886.

*Lucidus Maria,*  
*Cardinal Vicar.*

On October 31 also, the Cardinal Vicar approved the intentions for each day of the week, as contained in the community "Prayer Book," with the exception of some additions for Saturday and Sunday added in 1889, on April 24, and one for Friday, added on September 29 before some of the Sisters left for America: "For the permanent dependence of the branch houses on the mother-house in Rome."<sup>5</sup>

The Sisters were still wearing the black habit with the black cincture up to this time as Father Jordan had desired. Upon the petition of Mother Frances, the Cardinal Vicar granted permission to return to the original gray with the white cincture. On that same day, December 14, 1886, the Sisters also received the medal of the Sorrowful Mother. The first one was purchased at a local religious goods store; later, a special medal was engraved for the community.

Up to this time, the Sisters had not been permitted to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in their dwelling; only through an indult granted by Pope Leo XIII on November 13, 1886, were they permitted to do so. On Christmas Day this great privilege became a reality, and the Savior of the world took up His humble abode in surroundings of material poverty but of great and ardent love.

When Father Jacquemin was appointed spiritual director in 1885, not all of the Sisters were pleased with the appointment. They would have preferred Msgr. De Waal and even continued to show their preference for him as spiritual guide. In order to remedy this situation, Mother Frances suggested to him in a letter of October 12, 1886, that, for the good of the community, it would be better to have one person fulfill both offices. She and the Sisters were deeply appreciative of all that Msgr. De Waal had done for them, and in return for his kindness and his services,

they cared for the vestments and linens of his church of the Campo Santo for thirty-five years.

The burden of temporal administrator soon fell upon Msgr. Jacquemin, when he was appointed Msgr. De Waal's successor by the Cardinal Vicar on October 19, 1886. Thus, being the community's spiritual director and temporal administrator, he was its ecclesiastical superior in the name and by the authority of the highest ecclesiastical superior, the Cardinal Vicar himself. His position as temporal administrator lasted until the year 1898, when the new congregation was raised to the rank of a papal institute and placed under the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith.

Although little more than one year had elapsed since her first profession, Mother Frances received permission from the Cardinal Vicar on March 26, 1887, to make her perpetual vows. This great day of her life, where she truly "walked in love, as Christ also loved us, and delivered Himself up for us," fell on Holy Thursday, April 7, 1887. By special permission, the Mass was celebrated in the little convent chapel, for at that time Holy Week Services were permitted only in parish churches. Appended to the record of this event we find the words: "The all-good God has so disposed in His mercy. Signed, Msgr. Jacquemin, spiritual director."

Now that Mother Frances was again safely within the protecting arms of an institute having the temporary approbation of the Church, she could turn with greater intimacy to the God of her heart and "walk in love," seeking to unite ever more closely the active with the contemplative life and teaching others to do the same. Soon she would have to venture out on high seas of her uncharted course and carry the name and the spirit of her institute to distant lands amid untold sacrifice and privations.

Mother Frances had seen in Carmel that her destiny was to be in a religious community involved in apostolic works of charity fused with deep contemplative prayer. As to the apostolate, her preference was the care of the sick, of poor and abandoned children, and the education of youth. But how to unite or permeate these works of charity with contemplative prayer is another mat-

ter. Saints have learned it from the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and their union with Christ, and from their utterings we are able to glean some notion of the ways they employed to effect it.

"Contemplation is the act of keeping the eye or the mind fixed upon some object or subject," according to Webster's Dictionary. In a religious sense, this naturally refers to God or some of His attributes or something closely related to Him. It means, therefore, "*lived union with God.*"

This union is possible in the moment, the acceptance of whatever happens in the moment and which takes one to God. The present moment is what God wills for the soul. To see His will in whatever comes, to look beyond external circumstances, to transcend them, and to accept a person or situation in the spirit of faith and charity, is to will the will of God. This is a living union, the valid follow-up of prayerful repose, silence, and desire. In this way, contemplation overflows into action, and action is fed by prayer."

The above quotation from a Franciscan Father expresses very well *what* this union should be. It is not, however, so easy to effect it. It must be applied in concrete situations, such as seeing God in every person, since each person is created according to the image of God, with a potential for sanctity and eternal happiness. Mother Frances wrote in her Norms: "It will be easy for us to endure the ill humor of the sick or the ignorance of the children if we live by faith and represent to ourselves Christ in them — Christ as a patient, Christ as a helpless child."

It also means seeing the will or permission of God in every occurrence of life, in every moment of the day, and in all the crosses and tribulations of this present life. It entails seeking God's will and good pleasure in whatever we do, not our own; likewise, seeking God's glory in all our work and actions, not our own satisfaction, must be the aim of our life. Self-fulfillment comes from making choices that are in tune with God's will, rather than from nature's drives for power, prestige, and pleasure for personal gain or self-aggrandizement.

Vatican II gives us explicit directions as to our religious life in community. Number 5 of *Perfectae Caritatis* states:



The members of each community should recall above everything else that by their profession of the evangelical counsels they have given answer to a divine call to live for God alone, not only by dying to sin, but also by renouncing the world. They have handed over their entire life to God's service in an act of special consecration which is deeply rooted in their baptismal consecration and which provides for ampler manifestation of it. . . .

Therefore in fidelity to their profession and in renunciation of all things for the sake of Christ, let religious follow Him as their one necessity and be preoccupied with His work.

To this end, they should seek God before all things and only Him; the members of each community should combine contemplation with apostolic love. By the former, they adhere to God in mind and heart; by the latter they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the Kingdom of God. . . . In every circumstance, they aim to develop a life hidden in Christ with God.

Mother Frances regarded the life of the Holy Family as the ideal of her religious life, because there the active was combined in the closest union with the contemplative life, and God's will, not self-will, was the focal point of their activity. God was the center of her thinking and acting; all was subordinate to Him in perfect obedience, purity of heart, ardent love and union. The day and its work were dedicated to God through praying and singing psalms at early morn and at definite times of the day. All her thoughts were directed to God, and in the Franciscan manner she loved and practiced poverty and simplicity as they were practiced in the Holy Family. Her first admonition was, "Remember that religious life is a life of faith, which brings happiness and protects us against ambition, greed, and excessive desire to please."<sup>7</sup>

In practice, she taught the Sisters to pray short ejaculatory prayers during their work, so that while the hands were at work the heart might be with God. In one of her first directives, Norm 7, she wrote: "Since idle talk is forbidden, for a soul versed even a little in the spiritual life, it is easy to have her hands at work

and her heart with Him who will be her portion for time and eternity." She recommended prayers in common, said aloud during work where it could easily be done.

Silence was for Mother Frances the guardian of the interior life, as she states in Norm 27: "The strength of a soul striving after holiness lies in silence." In one of the Norms she prescribed a day of renewal, recommending that each Sister "set aside one day a month as a special day of rest and recovery for her soul, by withdrawing from her usual tasks in order to examine the condition of her soul in prayer and meditation." She stressed especially the preparation and thanksgiving before and after Holy Communion, each for the duration of a half hour. "Indirectly, all our prayers and work should be directed toward preparing us to receive the Supreme Good ever more fervently and worthily." Holy Mass, as stated before, was the supreme moment of the day, and she was most concerned, as some of the first members declare, that everyone attend the Holy Sacrifice daily. Sister M. Alphonsa Boell related that they daily prayed the breviary in two choirs, facing each other, standing.

Truly, it was, as she had written to Father Jordan, not prayers, but the spirit of prayer that she wished to infuse into the congregation. Prayer is the leaven that must permeate all activity. The soul must strive to gain more and more the mastery over itself by doing everything in closest union with Christ, being His constant companion, and transfusing all into His love. A person must strive to be conscious of the divine indwelling and often think of and speak to Christ dwelling within. Gradually, all activity becomes permeated with prayer, and contemplation flows over into action.

Already in the spring of 1885 there were efforts made to begin an establishment in Schesslitz, Bavaria, near Bamberg where the parents of Mother Frances then lived. Although there is no mention of this in the Community Chronicle, we learn of it from a letter of Father Jordan to Sister Theresia von Wuellenweber and Sister Ursula in Neuwerk, June 27, 1885, in which he wrote, "I hope that the approval of the establishment of our Sisters in

Bavaria will come from the Minister there within a short time." It was in Schesslitz that Sisters Johanna and Scholastica were staying in the summer of 1885, and from where Sister Scholastica was recalled to Rome in July. As later disclosed by Sister Johanna, the Sisters were to take over the city hospital.<sup>8</sup>

This project, however, did not materialize, as the close connections between church and state made it very difficult for new religious congregations or, as a matter of fact, for any congregation to make a new foundation, especially during the Kulturkampf. The document signed by Dr. von Lutz, secretary general of the Ministerial Council, and Dr. v. Giehrl enumerates a number of points in, or omitted from, the "Rule and General Norms" of the Catholic Teaching Society, printed in 1884 for the Sisters, which fail to give adequate information to the authorities for assessment of the petition. Furthermore, it was pointed out that there were many other female orders and congregations doing the same work — care of the poor, of neglected and crippled children — and for this reason alone there was little prospect of permitting a new congregation to make a foundation.

A transcript of the resolution issued November 4, 1885, to the Home Office for Church and School Affairs, Royal Government Offices in Bamberg, in regard to the petition presented by the Sisters of Charity of the Catholic Teaching Society, Rome, for permission for an establishment in Bavaria, was sent to the royal magistrate Streitel, so that he could forward it to his daughter, Mother Frances.

Beginning in 1884, the Sisters had accepted the care of the sick in their homes, and this they did without asking for any kind of remuneration; for this reason they also rarely received any, mostly because the sick were too poor. In 1884 also, as we have seen, the care of poor, abandoned children was begun. The Community Chronicle tells us that when the Sisters moved to No. 41, Borgo Santo Spirito, the children also helped. From the later recollections of the Sisters, especially of Sister M. Coletta Eberth, we learn that there were about fourteen orphan girls who were cared for by the Sisters, and who lived on the first floor of the

house, which had a separate entrance for them. They occupied two rooms, one as dormitory and the other as work and living room; there was no connection with the convent. Sister Coletta was in charge of them in the early years.<sup>9</sup>

These efforts of apostolic work, charitable though they were, produced only an insignificant amount of remuneration, and the Sisters could not possibly eke out an existence from them, much less pay rent and other running expenses. Msgr. Jacquemin generously helped with his own personal resources and with contributions which he obtained from priest friends and others. The thoughts of Mother Frances and Monsignor naturally turned again, in Franciscan manner, to the soliciting of alms. On November 3, 1885, permission was granted by the Cardinal Vicar for four Sisters to solicit alms in Germany and Austria. Sisters Stanisla Schoen, Pia Hagemann, Angela Popp, and Columba Gries undertook this task. The Cardinal Vicar, in person, gave the Sisters letters of warm recommendation to the ecclesiastical authorities in the two countries, and both the German and the Austrian ambassadors in Rome provided recommendations to civil authorities for them.

The Sisters were ordinarily given the itinerary by Msgr. De Waal, but because of local circumstances they could not always follow it. In Berlin, as elsewhere, religious were forbidden to appear in public in their religious garb. In spite of this the Sisters walked openly in the streets, trusting in St. Joseph as a guide. They even went to the palace of Empress Augusta, who was known for her benevolence toward Catholics. Upon entering, they found that they could not see Her Majesty because she had just retired after a long audience. The lady-in-waiting, however, took their collection book, and to their utter surprise returned after a few minutes with a donation of over 300 marks, entered by the Empress herself over her own signature in the book.<sup>10</sup> This signature, of course, proved to be an invaluable aid to the Sisters, both for police protection and against other harassment.

The Sisters were generally well received by church and civil authorities as well as by the people. In some places, however,

there was difficulty in receiving the required local permission from the bishop, the pastor, or the local town officials. Reasons for this were either general restrictions on collecting by the bishop, previous collections by other religious, or the needs of local parishes. In one place permission to collect was withheld because shortly before, two men from Switzerland disguised as religious had collected alms.

Lodging and food for the Sisters was usually found in convents, but occasionally the Sisters stayed at the priest's house or with a family. Aside from the gifts of the nobility and the royalty, even the poor contributed their mite in true charity.

There was constant communication between the Sisters and the business administrator, Msgr. De Waal, to whom the funds were sent either by them or directly by the donor. Detailed accounts of how they were faring, of their successes or difficulties in collecting, reached the motherhouse in Rome. Letters from Mother Frances were infrequent, for Sister Angela wrote in mid-December, 1885, that she regretted not hearing from her and hoped she was in good health.

On January 6, 1886, Sister Pia wrote from Limburg, Germany, how greatly concerned the bishop of the diocese was for her and Sister Stanisla. Like a kind father he inquired if they had eaten, had a place to stay, and were warmly clothed. In the course of their visit he spoke to them, too, of how highly the Emperor esteemed the Holy Father and how greatly he desired unity with the Church. The Empress also, he said, had told him with tears in her eyes that she prayed daily for unity with the Church.

A few months later Sister Stanisla wrote from Luxemburg on April 11 that the Franciscan Sisters with whom they were staying had told them the regulations about collecting in that area were very strict and Sisters themselves had been put into prison. They, on the contrary, had been received with much kindness by the bishop since he had received word of their coming from Msgr. Jacquemin. Sister Stanisla mentioned, too, what joy the news had brought them that the Most Blessed Sacrament was to be kept in

the motherhouse chapel. (As we have seen, this first took place on December 25 of that year, 1886.)

Shortly after July, 1887, Sister M. Sebastiana Hoerling and Sister M. Anna Niegel were sent from Rome to Wuerttemberg to meet Sisters M. Angela and Pia, who were collecting in their home districts of Saulgau and Braunweiler. The latter two continued collecting in Germany, while Sisters Sebastiana and Anna proceeded into France, via Switzerland, stopping at Freiburg, Paris, and Lyons. In Lyons, the Sisters found not only monetary contributions but also a prospective candidate. While staying at a boarding place the two Sisters, before retiring, sang the *Stabat Mater* and other hymns in their room. This so impressed a young German girl staying there that she questioned them closely about their community and the prospects of being accepted in Rome. She was accepted and became Sister M. Gabriela Ortlieb, one of the early Sisters of the community accepted by Mother Frances.<sup>11</sup>

The people, however, who outdid themselves in generosity were the people of Poland. The two Sisters, Johanna and Columba, were unfamiliar with the Polish language, but somehow, through the help of Our Blessed Lady, at whose place of pilgrimage called "Dietrichswalde" they were eyewitnesses to a remarkable cure of a sick mother, they managed to make known their mission. Priests notified one another in writing, as the documents from Rome were written in Latin, to inform their parishioners of the Sisters' coming. The Poles were willing to do anything the pastor wished; nowhere else did the Sisters find such cooperation between pastor and people as in Poland.

Most edifying was the zeal and devotion of the Polish people. Early before dawn on Sunday they rose in order to reach the church for Mass, waiting patiently in the cold and snow until the door was finally opened. After the second Mass, some even remained for afternoon Vespers! In the poorer regions the people could not afford vehicles for transportation and had to walk long distances. At such times the Sisters also had to walk through ice and snow in winter, unless the clergy were able to give them a ride. The people shared their frugal meals with the Sisters and

gladly gave them their widow's mite even though it was badly needed by themselves. In one far-out area they were overjoyed just at seeing Sisters once more, for they had lost all contact with religious after the Ursulines left because of the Kulturkampf. In other areas, the Sisters were always hospitably received by the Sisters of Mercy of St. Charles Borromeo and by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, as well as by the Gray Sisters of St. Joseph's Institute. The collection tours among the Polish people continued to the end of September, 1887, when thoughts were then directed to another and far distant country — America!<sup>12</sup>

Hardly had the members of the young congregation set their feet upon solid ground, so to speak, with their new constitutions from Msgr. Jacquemin, when death began to claim a number of them from its ranks.

Sister Antonia Brehm was already advanced in spirituality when she entered the community. Before she left home, the words resounded in her ears, "What will the riches of this world profit you if your heart is displeasing to the Lord God?" For this reason she tried by every means to please God in her daily occupations. If the food was not cooked well, in spite of her efforts in the kitchen, she accepted the humiliation and used it for the good of her soul, saying it was worth more than all else. When called upon, she went out to nurse patients in their homes, often during the night, and it was through this that she contracted tuberculosis. Because of her exterior healthy appearance, no one surmised her condition until it was too late. She died on December 4, 1884, the feast of St. Barbara, whose name she had received at baptism. "Jesus, for Thee I live" was the last prayer on her lips. The first Sister of the community to die, she was now its first intercessor in heaven.

Sister Rosa Rebhan was scarcely sixteen years of age when she entered, but she possessed a mature spirituality. Her desire was to die a martyr. Some time, during the month of October, 1885, she mentioned that she was always dreaming of war; she had a premonition of being killed. She therefore made a general confession to the spiritual director in Santa Maria dell' Anima Church on October 16, 1885, and received Holy Communion the same

morning. On the way home she was overrun by a coach on a street corner, where the Sisters did not see the vehicle approaching. She was taken to the nearest hospital, but soon gave her pure soul back into the hands of her Creator. Her brother is mentioned as being among the clerics in Father Jordan's Institute.<sup>13</sup>

The Community Chronicle mentions that Mother Frances accepted postulants who were already ailing when they entered the community, so as to prepare them for a happy death. Sister Coletta Lautenschlaeger, who died on December 10, 1884, and Sister Sebastiana Griebel on August 18, 1885, evidently were accepted on this premise. Sister Veronica Pechinino, who has already been cited in connection with her collection tour in France, died an edifying death on October 8, 1885.

In the year 1886, six Sisters were called to their eternal reward, two of them dying on the same day.

Sister M. Theresa Ziegmann is mentioned in the Chronicle as dying a most edifying death on the evening before the feast of the Seven Dolors, April 15. Though very young, she resembled St. Teresa in her courage and magnanimity already at her entrance. "I want to become a good Sister, a saint, cost what it may," was her resolve. The Divine Will soon placed her on her sickbed, where she was happy and cheerful, always conversing with Jesus and inviting Him to come to her. Finally, the moment did arrive, and the Divine Spouse came to claim His pure little bride.

The last Sister who died in 1886 was Sister M. Aquinata Voll. The Sisters made a novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help for her recovery, but she died on the last day of the novena. God had His own designs for her.

The beginning of the year 1887 brought the death of Sister M. Paula Riedel, January 8. The Sisters began a novena in honor of the Mother of God and prayed very fervently the rosary, the *Miserere*, the *De Profundis*, and other prayers in their affliction, fearing that God would take others from their midst. Several more Sisters became ill, and the Sisters redoubled their supplications, for it seemed that God in His incomprehensible decrees wanted to visit them with more trials.



On February 8, another Sister became ill with smallpox! She had to be entirely isolated, and soon there was another with the same dread disease. Neither of the two succumbed to it, but the scars remained as a reminder of the suffering they had undergone.

Dr. Oresta Gamba was the able and kind doctor who was engaged as the Sisters' physician in 1886, and as such he remained for many years.

It had become known that there were many deaths occurring in the little convent, and the Cardinal Vicar became anxious lest trouble arise in the municipal office also. He therefore asked for a report of the number of Sisters who had died, and how far the work of the alteration of the house had progressed. A list of the deceased Sisters was sent to him, thirteen in all. The Sisters also feared a municipal investigation, since rumors had spread that the cause of so many deaths was in the way the Sisters lived. But it did not come to this, and soon everyone recovered.<sup>14</sup>



# CHAPTER 6



## **The Missions**



"I HAVE . . . APPOINTED YOU THAT YOU SHOULD GO AND BEAR FRUIT, AND THAT YOUR FRUIT SHOULD REMAIN" (John 15:16)

*"He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance" (Eph 5:2).*

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Sister Joachim was jerked out of her sleep as the ship lurched from side to side and cabin stools were thrown about. Waves, mountain-high, almost engulfed the whole steamer; thunder rolled in never-ending peals, and flashes of lightning zigzagged across the sky, as the frightened travelers peered through the circular window to get a glimpse of the terrible storm that was threatening to bring disaster on them all. As soon as she and Sister Scholastica were able to go on deck, they ventured out of their cabins; white-faced travelers, more frightened than they, peered out from every door. Thick cumulus clouds hung low over their heads, and as they were preparing to enter New York harbor, before their very eyes a ship swung around, lurched from side to side several times, and began to sink. People were already scrambling into lifeboats for safety, as rescue ships came from the coast. This was the first glimpse of America that Sister Scholastica and Sister Joachim had; many years later Sister Scholastica wrote, "It was marvelously beautiful to see the almighty power of God."<sup>1</sup>

On Ash Wednesday, February 15, 1888, the Cardinal Vicar had authorized the journey of the Sisters to America for the purpose of soliciting alms for the needs of the Sisters and the poor in Rome, but more than that, with an eye for a new foundation which would provide a field of apostolic labor in which the aim of Mother Frances could be realized, that of uniting the

active with the contemplative life. Sister Joachim, who passed to her eternal reward in 1945, herself states in her recollections:

All credit, of course, is due to our Reverend Mother Foundress. She was very zealous in promoting God's honor and glory. Pondering seriously over the words of our Divine Savior: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few," she heeded no hardships or trials that inevitably would overwhelm her newly canonically established community. . . .

To be frank, I can't deny that we too had imbibed some of her generous and sacrificial spirit and eagerly anticipated the moment when we should be permitted to go forth, as once Our Lord sent His apostles, two by two, without possessing any other means or qualifications than blind obedience and childlike docility.<sup>2</sup>

It is true, they were not totally unprepared, for they had been studying English in the motherhouse in Rome; their teacher had been Father Paul Wehrle, a priest of the Diocese of Freiburg in Breisgau, Germany, who was well qualified as he had been a missionary in North America.

The Cardinal Vicar blessed the Sisters before their departure, in order that their efforts might be successful.

Sisters Scholastica and Joachim, therefore, departed from the motherhouse on February 21, 1888, and sailed via Naples on February 26 to New York. There was almost a tragedy when they entered the boat at Naples; Sister Scholastica took a wrong step and almost fell into the water, but someone quickly caught her and averted the accident.

After two days the ship halted and then moved slowly toward Gibraltar. At that point the ship's crew wanted by all means to make Sister Scholastica disembark, fearing she would not be able to complete the journey to America, as she had already been very ill on the steamer. But the Sisters would not hear of this; they had gone in obedience to the Divine Will of God as their superiors had asked them, and they were confident that God would sustain them throughout their journey.

After they continued their voyage for a short time, a light siege

of smallpox broke out, but fortunately the Sisters escaped this epidemic. A woman and a child died and were buried in their watery grave in the ocean.

Of the nine steamers which left port at the same time, only five reached their destination. The ship in which the Sisters traveled was also in great danger, as water forced its way through doors and windows. Lifeboats were ready, and the passengers had their places appointed in the individual lifeboats, should necessity dictate. Anyone can imagine the fear and the anxiety of these two young Sisters, and how they must have prayed that they and all their fellow travelers might safely reach shore.

One day, the physician on board ship asked one of the Sisters what she would do if her companion would die, as she was very ill. "Our dear Lord will not let that happen," was her confident rejoinder. They knew Mother Frances was raising her hands high in prayer and supplication for their safety and well-being on a perilous journey and in a strange land. "I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name." (Isaiah 49:15); so also were they remembered by the Sisters in the motherhouse.

After that stormy voyage of a month, and upon seeing a ship sink before their very eyes, they must have prayerfully breathed the most fervent "Thanks be to God" as the steamer docked and they landed on March 27 at the Port of Hoboken, New Jersey, across the Hudson River from New York City.

At the pier they were met by Father John Reuland, a classmate of Msgr. Jacquemin in Luxemburg, who was now in charge of the Bureau of the St. Raphael Society in New York, which assisted German immigrants upon their entry into America and helped them in their first attempts in becoming acclimatized to a new country. Father took them to St. Francis Hospital in New York, conducted by the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis, where they were hospitably received. When the first news of the arrival in New York reached Rome, Msgr. Jacquemin wrote on April 9, "Should you see the Reverend Father Reuland again, please ex-

press to him my innermost gratitude for his efforts to help you reach the Sisters." But when these Sisters heard that the Venerable Sisters Scholastica and Joachim had come to collect alms for the motherhouse, they gave them the most discouraging information and advised them to return to Europe. There were already too many European Sisters collecting in America, and in New York the ecclesiastical authorities would permit nothing of the kind.

The problem was that at this time, especially during and after the Kulturkampf, many had come from overseas, from all nationalities, seeking help from America, and in such great numbers that they had become a real problem. Mingled with those seeking alms were imposters, who exploited the goodness of their countrymen and used the money for their own gain.

To deal with this problem, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884, presided over by the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Gibbons of Baltimore, issued the strongly worded decree No. 295, that no one would be allowed to collect, nor would priest collectors be allowed to celebrate Holy Mass unless the head superior of the Order or, in case of a diocesan priest, the local ordinary requested this permission from the bishop of the diocese in which they wished to ask for alms. This decree of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore was officially promulgated on January 6, 1886, and as it referred mainly to the United States, it is quite certain that Msgr. Jacquemin was not aware of it, and therefore did not request the permission of the bishops involved before the arrival of the Sisters.

Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York, although a very kind man, had made it known that for a period of ten years, collections by foreign Sisters of whatever nationality, as well as secular and religious priests, would be forbidden in the diocese.

Disappointed but not discouraged, the two Sisters turned toward Philadelphia. It was evidently Father Reuland, the "kind priest" mentioned by Sister Scholastica, who had pity on them and paid their railroad fare. It was April 6, 1888. In that city, as Sister wrote, "Divine Providence led us to the monastery where Brother Ferdinand Hoerling" (the brother of Sister Sebastiana, as they



discovered) "was teaching school as a Christian Brother." The Brothers' monastery with an adjoining school for boys, was near St. Peter's Church, one of the German parish churches in the city, in charge of the Redemptorist Fathers. Brother Ferdinand took the Sisters to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who were in charge of the parish school for girls. They received them kindly, but because of expected visiting superiors, could not give them a room. Brother Ferdinand then took them to Mrs. Elizabeth Heck, who cordially offered them hospitality during their stay in Philadelphia. The Sisters, however, spent much time with the School Sisters of Notre Dame, where they were able to perform their spiritual exercises and presumably learn some English. They had the privilege, moreover, of praying at the tomb of Bishop, now St. John, Neumann of Philadelphia. He had already rested thirty years in St. Peter's Church, and his body at that time was still intact.<sup>3</sup>

Archbishop Patrick Ryan of Philadelphia, also a man of great kindness, was known never to have uttered an uncharitable word about anyone. In spite of the fact that their request for soliciting alms was not preceded by the formalities prescribed by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, in his kindness he allowed the Sisters to collect alms for two weeks. It was through Mrs. Heck that the Sisters, accompanied by a lady, obtained this permission in writing from His Excellency.

During their residency in Philadelphia the Sisters became acquainted with several ladies who greatly desired that they start a foundation in that city. One of these ladies, Mrs. Agatha Bishofsberger, a widow, offered to donate her house to the Sisters if she could have a room and continue to live there for the rest of her life. Also Mrs. Caroline Walter, who had formed a rather personal friendship with Sister Scholastica, greatly favored an establishment, and seems to have discussed it with the pastor of St. Peter's Church, Rev. Charles Sigl, C.S.S.R. Being a prudent man, however, and knowing the mind of the archbishop, he did not press the issue at that time, nor did he oppose it.

The people in Philadelphia were very generous, and their con-

tributions brought great relief to the financial worries of the superiors in Rome. At the expiration of the two weeks granted them by the ecclesiastical authority, the two Sisters left for Baltimore to go to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, where, as Sister Scholastica states, "Mother Clara was extremely good" to them. There they met Mother Caroline, superior of the American Commissariat of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in America. She had just come from Milwaukee, her American headquarters, and gave the Sisters a written statement to the effect that wherever her own Sisters were located, the two Sisters from Rome "would find a home just as if they belonged to them."

Here, indeed, was charity personified, and a friendship was begun which to this day has continued in mutual love and esteem. In later years, after the establishment of hospitals by the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, these Sisters sought to repay the early charity of the Notre Dame Sisters by exercising charity toward them in regard to reduction of hospital payments and medical costs.

After a four-week stay in Baltimore, Sisters Scholastica and Joachim moved on to Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Detroit, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Milwaukee. Other cities listed in the Chronicle are Quincy, Illinois; Rochester, New York; and Louisville, Kentucky. At the motherhouse of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Milwaukee, they met the spiritual director, Father Peter Matthias Abbelen, who was also highly esteemed by His Excellency, Archbishop Michael Heiss. Father Abbelen had become acquainted with Msgr. Jacquemin in Rome, and had given him alms for the motherhouse. He welcomed the Sisters, and in so favorable a climate, they easily obtained permission to solicit alms. From Milwaukee they left for St. Louis, Missouri. In some places the Sisters had more or less difficulty in obtaining permission to solicit alms, depending upon how strictly the bishops enforced the statutes of the Decree of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. In St. Louis it was particularly difficult, but permission was finally obtained on June 30, 1889, though with restrictions. Later it was learned from Msgr. Jacquemin's letter of June 30 that he

had celebrated Holy Mass in Rome that morning in honor of St. Louis, patron of the city of St. Louis. The Sisters had kept him well informed about their destination, and he, in turn, kept them informed about the motherhouse. On June 11 he had written that the Sisters in Rome were studying English again.

Occasionally the Sisters met with rebukes, but on the whole, people were generous in giving. Again, as before, when they had shared with them their own shoes and clothing in the freezing cold of winter, the School Sisters of Notre Dame were their greatest benefactors. From Msgr. Jacquemin's letter of July 15, 1889, we learn that at St. Louis, Sister M. Aurea, the Notre Dame superior, had invited the Sisters to make their annual retreat with them. To this they heartily agreed, being most grateful for the opportunity. As an expression of thanks, Msgr. Jacquemin sent each of the Notre Dame houses a "Papal Blessing" of Pope Leo XIII.

During their stay in St. Louis, the Vicar General of the Diocese, Rev. Henry Muehlsiepen, informed them that Bishop John Joseph Hennessy of Wichita, Kansas, was looking for Sisters for his hospital there. He was not satisfied with the service which the hospital was able to give to the people, because the Sisters of Mercy who operated the hospital did not have the necessary personnel to staff it. Sister M. Ignatius Gaynor, the superior, had died on April 29, 1889,<sup>3a</sup> and the other three Sisters could not carry on alone. The bishop proposed to these Sisters the alternative of securing more help or of placing the institution in other hands. He gave them sufficient time to arrange this, but it could not be adjusted to his satisfaction.

The Vicar General advised Sisters Joachim and Scholastica to write to Rev. Henry Tihen in Wichita, who had just been in St. Louis asking for Sisters to take over the hospital, and stated that he would also write to the Bishop of Wichita in favor of the undertaking.

All this was communicated to the motherhouse in Rome. On July 27, 1889, the bishop's consent was received and then forwarded to Rome by cablegram. The next day a Holy Mass was

celebrated at the motherhouse in honor of St. Joseph, and to him was entrusted the beginning of the apostolate in America. A reply was sent to Bishop Hennessy in Wichita, that Sisters would come to take charge of the hospital.

Sisters Scholastica and Joachim therefore went to Wichita to investigate. There they found the Sisters of Mercy at the hospital, a poor, rented house in which not only patients but also a number of orphans were in the care of the Sisters. This also was communicated to Msgr. Jacquemin, who then corresponded with Father Tihen and in reply was told that five Sisters would suffice for the time being, and that the hospital was dedicated to St. Francis. Msgr. Jacquemin needed still more information about the project, whether or not they would actually acquire the hospital, who owned it, and what was to be done with the orphans. After satisfactory negotiations, he communicated to Father Tihen the time of the Sisters' departure, probably the end of October, and that he himself would accompany them.

To the two Sisters he again wrote that in Rome the Sisters were working hard at learning English: "There are two who are far advanced; all the others are quite far behind. But with God's help, they will all learn something yet. However, they will have to learn the most in Wichita, especially the colloquial way of speaking English. You must not, therefore, give the bishop too high an impression of the Sisters' English. Since you, Venerable Sisters, have already gained some knowledge of it, you will be able to help out everywhere."

During the time that the Sisters were soliciting alms in various places, they corresponded with their benefactors in Philadelphia, who from the very beginning were very zealous in lending personal assistance for a desired establishment there. Those whose financial circumstances did not enable them to lend personal assistance, wished to share in the work by collecting charitable contributions. In this way there originated the Society of the Sorrowful Mother which was established in the motherhouse. It was merely a society, not a confraternity, and was therefore not subject to the canonical regulations for a confraternity. On July 6, 1888, His Eminence,

Cardinal Vicar Parocchi, approved this Society of the Sorrowful Mother and permitted small pictures of the Sorrowful Mother with an explanatory text to be distributed among the members of the Society, who were to be enrolled by promoters. Among the first members and promoters were ladies from Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore; Elizabeth, New Jersey; and Buffalo, New York. For an annual contribution to the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother in Rome, to aid in their charitable care of poor and helpless sick persons, and the education of young abandoned girls, the members benefited spiritually by the daily prayers offered for them by the Sisters in Rome at the tombs of the Princes of the Apostles and of the Holy Martyrs, by the Holy Masses celebrated for them in the Sisters' chapel, and the Communion offered for them. For a contribution of ten dollars, members were entitled to perpetual membership and a share, living or dead, in the benefits as long as the Society would continue to exist. In 1911, upon the humble request of Msgr. Jacquemin, His Holiness, Pope Pius X, became a member of the Society on May 24, entering in his own handwriting the words, "Gladly will I join the Society of the Sorrowful Mother and I hope that its members will pray much for me." He approved the Society on May 2, 1912, by his autograph.

Most of the correspondence between the Sisters in America and the motherhouse was done through their director and community administrator, Msgr. Jacquemin, who frequently mentioned the ailing condition of Mother Frances. On February 9, 1889, he wrote to the Sisters traveling in America that the foundress was "suffering." After receiving a letter from the Sisters, he wrote on the following day, "Last night, at the 'Ave Maria,' when our triduum to Pius IX of blessed memory came to an end, she felt considerably improved, and this morning she was, one might say, wholly restored in a striking manner. It is evidently a gracious favor of God." Two weeks later he confirmed this striking improvement, saying, "Reverend Mother was able today to assist at Holy Mass and receive Holy Communion." In a letter of May

17, 1889, however, we find that she was suffering very severely from Roman fever, and in September she was ill, so ill that she could not acknowledge nameday congratulations sent her by the Notre Dame Mother Antonine and Miss Anna Raes. Msgr. Jacquemin wrote to the two Sisters that she would answer both letters when her health improved. Her illness at that time must indeed have been quite serious, for on August 5, 1889, she drew up her last will and testament, bequeathing all her present and future possessions to Msgr. Jacquemin. In time, she regained her health and was able herself to undertake a trip to America.

The question of an establishment of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother in Philadelphia was brought up for the first time in July, 1888, in an exchange of letters between Msgr. Jacquemin and the Sisters about two months after they had left Philadelphia, and almost a year before the first stirrings from Wichita took place. Writing to the two Sisters, he advised them not to be in haste, but to first finish their task of collecting alms, and thereby become acquainted with the conditions of the country and the circumstances in various cities. He also cautioned them not to make any verbal commitments, merely to tell the beneficent lady in Philadelphia that the superiors in Rome would be very glad to obtain a house, but the convent at this time, having no means of sustenance, would have to depend entirely upon Divine Providence and the generosity of benefactors. Only after they were assured of a house in America would the superiors apply to the Most Reverend Archbishop, as well as to the rector of St. Peter's, the Rev. Charles Sigl, C.S.S.R., to obtain the necessary permission.

Msgr. Jacquemin did all he could to acquaint himself with the situation involved. At this time there was in Rome a Redemptorist Father, Joseph Wirth, who had been Father Sigl's predecessor as rector of St. Peter's Church and was now the postulator of the cause for the beatification of Bishop John Neumann of Philadelphia. It was during his stay in Rome that he became acquainted with Msgr. Jacquemin. When asked whether he thought the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother could find a sphere of activity in

Philadelphia, he replied in the affirmative, saying he considered the plan easy to carry into effect.<sup>4</sup>

Msgr. Jacquemin wrote to Mrs. Anna Bilharz of Philadelphia, who had offered her help, asking her opinion also regarding an establishment, and inquiring whether they could eventually appeal to her generosity and cooperation. She, too, answered in the affirmative but cautioned, "Before anything else, you must have permission from the Most Rev. Archbishop Ryan."

Great news arrived from Mrs. Walter to Sister Scholastica on May 16, 1889, when she wrote, saying, "Mrs. Bischofsberger has offered her house rent-free. She wishes to make her home with your Sisters; one room would be sufficient for her, and if there is anything lacking, then she would help with that too."

This news was immediately forwarded to Msgr. Jacquemin and must have reached the motherhouse in Rome at the beginning of June, 1889. Without delay, Msgr. Jacquemin addressed three letters to the benefactors in Philadelphia, thanking them for their noble offer to help the congregation "to work there for abandoned little girls and to take care of the sick poor." He now came to the important point, that they, together with the Sisters, should approach the archbishop and obtain the necessary permission to establish a house. He made it clear to them that all the community could do was to send Sisters. To Sisters Scholastica and Joachim he wrote that they, together with the ladies in question, should approach the archbishop and first obtain both his opinion on the matter and his consent to their enterprise. This letter reached the two Sisters while they were in St. Louis, and for the time being the matter of the hospital in Wichita claimed both their time and their attention. "Already on June 26, 1889," Msgr. Jacquemin recorded in his later "Summary" of events at that time, "the two Sisters wrote that there were some difficulties in Philadelphia, without giving more specific information about them." Had they told what the difficulties were, we could more easily reconstruct the situation. One of the points of controversy may have been the support of the Sisters. It is true, they could have done some home nursing, as they later did; but in a prosperous city such as

Philadelphia was, with well-developed parish schools, hospitals, orphanages, and up-to-date institutions of every kind, a hundred years after the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, it was a different matter for a group of people, lacking both professional training in the fields of health care, teaching, or social work, and possessing only a scant knowledge of the language of the country, to attempt to undertake any such establishment. It would have taken a considerable time until they could have become self-sufficient. Msgr. Jacquemin, as a doctor in church legislation, knew very well that before permitting the establishment of a new religious community in their dioceses, the bishops had to be assured of their competence in order not to impose a financial burden upon the faithful of the diocese. For this reason it would have to be clarified with the bishop what works they could assume and what means of self-support they at present, or soon, would possess. Surely, neither Mother Frances nor Msgr. Jacquemin had any idea of the magnitude of the obstacles that would have presented themselves to the Sisters had they been permitted to make an establishment in Philadelphia.

On September 30, 1889, Mrs. Walter wrote to Sister Scholastica that Father Sigl thought it would be best to begin with a kindergarten, rather than with an orphanage, if the bishop gave permission. He knew the cost of establishing anything like an orphanage, and was at a loss to know who would finance the undertaking.

As yet, the requested papers signed by Mrs. Bischofsberger in regard to the house had not arrived in Rome; nor had Father Sigl given any clear indication of his attitude toward the project to Msgr. Jacquemin. As for the permission of the bishop, the two Sisters and the ladies took for granted, or at least hoped, that Msgr. Jacquemin himself would attend to this important detail. In his last letter of October 18, before embarking for America, Msgr. Jacquemin thanked the Sisters and told them that they, five Sisters for Wichita and four for Philadelphia, would leave November 3 and arrive about November 14 at New York, where he hoped to meet Father Reuland and the two Sisters from Philadel-



phia. Father Wehrle would substitute for him during his absence at the motherhouse.

Msgr. Jacquemin brought with him his "celebret," which is a letter by which a bishop gives permission to a priest to offer Holy Mass in his diocese, thereby certifying that he is a priest. He also had the faculty for hearing the confessions of Sisters. Besides having a recommendation by the Cardinal Vicar, Lucido Maria Parocchi, he had another from the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda, and another given him by the superior general of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, "for all the rectors of the houses of the Congregation in North America." Because of the optimistic tone of the letters which he had received from the ladies in America, Msgr. Jacquemin thought "all is well" on the American scene, and prayerfully prepared the Sisters for their approaching trip. The farewell from Rome on October 29, 1889,<sup>5</sup> was painful, especially for Mother Frances who, because of illness, would miss the assistance of both the spiritual director and Sister Johanna. But in a sense, it was also gratifying; here was the real beginning of the "active life combined with the contemplative," as nine young Sisters – M. Johanna Ankenbrand, Pia Hagemann, Columba Gries, Elia Henneman, Xaveria Niederbruckner, Mechtildis Bauer, Sebastiana Hoerling, Gabriela Ortlieb, and Alphonsa Boell – in all the ardor of their youthful zeal embarked upon the first mission of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother in America.

On October 27, 1889, they had received the blessing of Pope Leo XIII, and now, having prayed the liturgical prayers of the Itinerary in the chapel, they went by train to Antwerp, and on November 2, embarked upon the Noordland of the Red Star Line.

All had the best of intentions when embarking on the steamer and hoped they could perform their spiritual duties with much devotion and a relaxed spirit of prayer, contemplating the greatness of God on the vast ocean. But alas, a terrible storm broke loose, putting an end to their contemplation! After twelve days they landed at New York on November 14, where they were met by Sisters Scholastica and Joachim and taken to the Leo House, a

hospice for German immigrants, conducted by the Sisters of St. Agnes. Each Sister carried two heavy carpet bags as they had no trunks. From the Leo House, Miss Raes, one of the promoters of the Society of the Sorrowful Mother, took them to the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who arranged a large room where all nine Sisters spent the night. Msgr. Jacquemin stayed with the Redemptorist Fathers near by. The next day he traveled with Sisters Johanna, Columba, Elia, and Gabriela to Philadelphia, while the remaining five Sisters stayed in New York until he returned to take them to Wichita.

Upon their arrival in Philadelphia, the Sisters called upon Mrs. Bischofsberger. She had promised her house rent-free, but they were given just one room and the use of the one kitchen. On the third day after their arrival, Mrs. Bilharz inquired if one Sister could give nursing care to a certain Mrs. Schnell who was ill and wanted a Sister as nurse. She had been unable to engage a religious as they were all busy in hospitals. Two of the newly arrived Sisters, sometimes three, willingly agreed to care for Mrs. Schnell, staying with her day and night. Another Sister was called out to care for a patient suffering from a contagious disease and could not return until the patient was released from quarantine.

By what means or in what manner Archbishop Ryan learned of the projected establishment of the Sisters in Philadelphia, we do not know. Either Father Sigl consulted him on the matter or Sister Scholastica, on her return from Wichita, may have contacted Chancellor Horstmann, who spoke German and with whom she had become acquainted during her collection tour, in order that she might get in touch with the archbishop, who was away at the time.

Msgr. Jacquemin was cordially received by Father Sigl, but was immediately informed that the archbishop had not given permission for the Sisters to make a foundation in Philadelphia; it would be better for them if they went West. He had evidently heard that Bishop Hennessy of Wichita had received them favorably. Msgr. Jacquemin tells us in his "Summary" that the next day he

contacted Chancellor Horstmann, who told him that only if Father Sigl recommended it, could the Sisters stay.

On November 19, 1889, Msgr. Jacquemin received a letter from Father Wirth, from Rochester, New York, saying he was sorry to hear of the difficulties and advising him to go directly to the archbishop as well as to correspond with the provincial of the Redemptorists, the Rev. Elias Schauer. After these communications, Msgr. Jacquemin left for New York to take the remaining Sisters to Wichita for the new foundation.

Upon his return to Philadelphia on December 18, 1889, he was asked by Father Stommel of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, to permit the Sisters to settle in his new German parish of St. Bonaventure in Philadelphia. He himself, the pastor, would contact the archbishop and obtain the necessary permission.

Whatever the reasons were for the dispensation of Divine Providence in regard to the painful events that immediately followed, they are not ours to probe or decipher. We quote again from Msgr. Jacquemin's "Summary":

On December 28, 1889, the Most Reverend Archbishop forbade me to offer Holy Mass in his diocese; this he did through Father Hespelien [Minister in the Redemptorist community in charge of St. Peter's Church]. I traveled at once to Father Stommel. On December 30, he went to the Most Rev. Archbishop; he could do nothing. On December 31, I myself went to the Archbishop; he severely declared to me that he did not give the Sisters permission to settle in his diocese and did not permit me to celebrate Mass in his diocese; he refused to look at the testimonials which I had brought with me from Rome. Three days I remained without Holy Mass; then I went daily, from January 1 on, to Camden, New Jersey (Diocese of Trenton), to the Minorite Fathers to celebrate Mass in the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul.

To make matters worse, Mrs. Bischofsberger declared the Sisters would have to leave if the permission of the archbishop was not obtained soon, as people were blaming her for the presence of the Sisters there.

Certainly, Msgr. Jacquemin did not expect *this* in the city of "brotherly love." Not knowing all the circumstances, we do not comment upon any of the events. The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore gave this right to bishops, and Archbishop Ryan evidently exercised it. Be that as it may, the follower of Christ must be ready to bear the wood of the cross and trudge the rugged way of suffering and misunderstanding, unjust treatment, even as the Master who has gone on before him. And a misunderstanding it definitely was. There were two other Sisters collecting in the diocese, without permission of the archbishop, who were said to be from Rome, and the archbishop took for granted that they were the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. In virtue of the Decree No. 295 of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, which forbade collection by anyone not having the authorization of his major superior to present to the archbishop himself, he enforced the decree, but erroneously, in a case of mistaken identity. Divine Providence had worked things out, although a bit roughly!

In some handwritten notes which Msgr. Jacquemin had jotted down on January 4, 1890, during this trial, and which were later found, he wrote: "In the future I shall endeavor to comprehend the deep meaning of the words, *Tu es sacerdos in aeternum* [you are a priest forever], and care nothing for any honors whatever."

Before he left Philadelphia, Msgr. Jacquemin wrote to Archbishop Ryan, explaining the whole situation. He declared to him that the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother were not collecting alms at this time and had never done so beyond his written permission. There was no response. As early as January 3, during the time he was obliged to go to Camden, New Jersey, to offer Holy Mass, Msgr. Jacquemin had written to Bishop Michael J. O'Farrell, Bishop of Trenton, in whose diocese Camden was situated, asking whether or not it might be possible for the Sisters to establish themselves there, as the Schnell family had promised them their house in Berlin, New Jersey. He received no answer. On March 28, 1890, he wrote from Rome to this same bishop again and received the reply that the project seemed favorable but the diocese was poor, and the bishop would have to be assured of the support

of the Sisters. Of this he was assured by Msgr. Jacquemin, that the motherhouse would assume all responsibility. Again there was no answer. On the same day he wrote to Mr. Schnell in Philadelphia, regarding the house in Berlin, inquiring whether or not the offer of giving it to the Sisters was still open. Again, there was no answer.

As prospects of a foundation in Philadelphia or its environs were entirely unfavorable, Msgr. Jacquemin contacted Bishop Hennessy of Wichita and inquired if the remaining four Sisters, who had been destined for the Philadelphia mission, would also be permitted to work in the St. Francis Hospital. The bishop sent his affirmative answer by telegram, and the Sisters prepared to leave Philadelphia. Mrs. Schnell, who was very ill and knew she would not live much longer, begged the Sisters to remain with her until after her death and funeral. She died on January 13, 1890, and the Sisters remained there for her funeral on Monday, January 20. On the following day, Msgr. Jacquemin and the four remaining Sisters left for Wichita, where they arrived on January 23, 1890.

The state of Kansas was carved out of the territory known as the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. It became an organized territory on May 30, 1854, and attained to statehood in the Union on January 29, 1861. In 1864 a trading post with the Indians was established at the junction of the Arkansas and Little Rock Rivers, and near this was a village of Wichita Indians. When the Indians were moved from the territory to Oklahoma, a white settlement developed at the trading post, which became a stopping point for cattle drivers. Wichita was incorporated as a village in 1871, and as a city in 1886. By this time the Santa Fe Railway had already arrived, and the *Wichita Eagle* was founded in 1872. The years following 1880 were the so-called Kansas "boom," in which prosperity reached a height unknown. Streets were laid out and bonds issued for municipal improvements, such as electric light plants, street railways, water towers, and hydrants.

The population of the city of Wichita was about 23,800 at the time when the boom collapsed. A succession of years of drought

and crop failures had induced many of the settlers to abandon their farms and avail themselves of the opening of the new territory of Oklahoma. This part of Kansas was again "the great American desert" which, although farming had improved under better methods of agriculture, was still feeling keenly the drought of the past years, and both the rural population as well as the cities and towns were adversely affected by it.

The Diocese of Wichita was erected in 1887. The first bishop to be appointed was James O'Reilly, but he died that year, in July, before his consecration. Bishop John Joseph Hennessy followed him and must have begun the hospital in Wichita in the very beginning of his episcopate; there is no mention of a hospital or orphanage when the diocese was erected in 1887.

In 1887 Dr. Andrew Fabrique induced Bishop Hennessy and the Sisters of Mercy to open a hospital in a house which had been built by H. O. Burleigh in the early eighties.<sup>6</sup> It was one of the larger residences built during the boom days but vacated by people who moved elsewhere during or after the drought. It was a three-story house with open porches and a mansard roof, topped with two ornate towers. Records show that the first two patients were admitted on March 16, 1888, when the Sisters of Mercy took charge.

The population of Wichita and its environs was predominantly Protestant, and people were not accustomed to "hospitalization"; they preferred the care of the sick at home with the service of the family doctor. As to the Sisters' first contact with the Sisters of Mercy whom they had come to succeed, we are told by Sister Sebastiana Hoerling in her reminiscences that they were very pious and very kind, and that there was a house chapel dedicated to the Sorrowful Mother. They were obliged to have quite a number of hired help, even though they had only a few patients. "A lady had charge of the kitchen," states Sister Sebastiana, "several girls were in charge of the cleaning, and a colored man washed the dishes and carried the coal to all parts of the house, as each room was heated by a stove."

All the adverse circumstances mentioned above militated against

the Sisters of Mercy, and so they had to withdraw from the hospital.

Into this "house of poverty" the first mission Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother walked, and indeed, they walked! Sister Sebastian tells us they were met at the depot on November 26 by Father Meyer, a young priest sent by the bishop to accompany them to the hospital. They were lucky in that the depot was near St. Francis Hospital, only a little more than a block away, and so they did not have to carry their carpet bags too far.

In the house they literally did not know where to begin. There was not one pot or dish that was whole, for the person employed as dishwasher was by no means "careful" with the dishes. The linens, pillow cases, and sheets were frayed and torn since they were all, except for a few items, sent out for laundering. There were no screens on the windows; there was no central heating plant nor equipment for the care of the sick. This was indeed the "house of poverty," and Mother Frances saw in it the place destined for the community by Divine Providence. Msgr. Jacquemin later told the Sisters in Wichita how impressed the Sisters in Philadelphia had been on learning about this new house of poverty. He said, "They recognized a special mark of Divine Providence and a special love of Mary toward the Sisters in the fact that the little chapel in the house is dedicated to the Sorrowful Mother, and that in the whole house it is so easy to practice holy poverty."<sup>7</sup>

The Sisters took charge of the hospital officially on December 11, 1889; but the Sisters of Mercy remained until January of 1890. Msgr. Jacquemin was very sorry to see them leave. He expressed his thanks and appreciation to them for all the help they had given the Sisters, for they had learned from the Sisters of Mercy some practical nursing techniques, especially in regard to dispensing medicines and other hospital procedures. At that time there was no school of nursing in the city.

The time was evidently drawing near for Msgr. Jacquemin to return to Rome, and so he redoubled his efforts spiritually by giving the Sisters retreat, at the close of which, on January 30,

1890, Sister Columba made her perpetual vows, the first profession of vows of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother in America. During his stay in Wichita he had celebrated the daily community Mass for the Sisters and given them religious conferences. He had visited and consoled the sick in the hospital and had instructed the Sisters to record the religion of the patients upon their entrance to the hospital, so that the spiritual as well as the bodily needs could be cared for. After a most touching farewell blessing, he left for Rome on February 12, 1890, boarding a steamer at New York and arriving in Rome toward the end of February.

Once there, he convinced Mother Frances that she ought to go to America soon. To this she agreed, and on April 30, 1890, having taken leave of the Sisters in Rome, she traveled to Germany with Sisters M. Cecilia Fishan, Boniface Goetz, and Josepha Sigrist. On May 3, they left Antwerp on the steamer Waesland and sailed for New York.

Mother Frances had never been on the high sea before and her emotions were somewhat mixed as she wrote to her parents on May 11:

What a soul-experience to see Europe receding in the distance! I cannot describe it. One feels an involuntary distrust of the water in constant motion. For about three days I was seasick; now I am completely recovered. I feel sure that you, dear parents, have prayed long and fervently for the travelers, and I beg you to continue.

Meanwhile, as soon as the Sisters had taken over the hospital in Wichita, and there were many young hands, the process of renovating began. Cleaning and scrubbing were first in order, and this process was still in operation when Mother Frances arrived. Gradually the hired help was dismissed in order to cut down costs; so the Sisters took over laundry, sewing, cooking, and general housekeeping. One of the first problems to be solved was the scourge of mosquitoes and other insects, as the windows had no screens.

When Mother Frances and the other Sisters arrived on May



23, there was joy on every side. The Sisters at the hospital felt happy and secure once more in the presence of their foundress and superior general, and eagerly sought her advice on every issue. How good it felt to hear her encouraging words and her gentle, prayerful admonitions again! She, in turn, was overjoyed at being among her Sisters in the new mission, witnessing their prayerful spirit of service to the patients and their zeal in the new apostolate. No one could restrain her from doing the menial labor which they performed, even to scrubbing the floor on her knees, mindful of Him who said, "What I just did was to give you an example; as I have done, so you also must do" (John 13:15).

As so many Sisters had left the motherhouse in Rome, Mother Frances felt it necessary to send Sister Johanna back to Rome to take charge there during her absence. Her trip on the steamer *Trave* brought her safely, via Bremen, to Rome on June 12.

The most acute problem in Wichita was that of finances. The hospital could care for only twelve patients at a time, and some of these were county patients, who paid only \$3.00 per week. For nursing in private homes the Sisters received fifty cents per day. With the rent being \$50.00, later \$40.00 per month, it was an impossibility to make ends meet. But in those days many were poor. The churches were no better off than the hospital, and the cathedral was an old dilapidated frame structure; the bishop had one vestment for all occasions.

The Sisters' greatest benefactor, notwithstanding, was Bishop Hennessy who, though himself almost destitute, managed to obtain for them a monstrance, vestment, cope, candlesticks, and other articles necessary for Holy Mass and for the Sisters' chapel. He frequently went out to solicit alms for his poor cathedral, and upon his return would give some of the money to the hospital to buy food, following the Divine Master's injunction, "Tell no one about it." Many times he stopped at the hospital on horseback, with butter, eggs, vegetables, and other necessities.

One day, soon after Mother Frances had come to Wichita, the doorbell rang and at the door stood the janitor of the cathedral.

"Come out here," he said to the portress, "and look at the

present from the bishop!" She looked around but saw nothing that might resemble a gift.

"Don't you see anything?" he asked.

"I don't see anything like a gift," was her answer.

"Oh, is that so? Don't you see the horse and buggy?"

Greatly surprised, she exclaimed, "Is that from the bishop?" Immediately she called Mother Frances, who in turn called Sister Scholastica and asked the janitor to drive them over to the bishop's house at once.

Having thanked him and visited for a short time, they prepared to leave; but when he accompanied them to the door, he seemed to have another thought.

"Wait a minute," he said. He went back into the house and returned with a beautiful green plush lap robe, which he gave to Sister Scholastica to carry.

"Don't be proud," he called after them. Sister Scholastica surmised he must have read her thoughts, as she had just imagined how nice it would look.

The Sisters never refused any patients, even if they received no remuneration whatsoever from them, and if they themselves were in dire straits.

One day, Mother Frances asked Sisters Sebastiana and Joachim to go into the city to solicit some alms for the needy hospital. They returned at night tired and hungry, with eleven cents! This was the last time Mother Frances asked them to go on such an errand.

In later years the Sisters remarked that it was the poor who brought blessings to St. Francis Hospital. At the time of greatest need, God provided. During the first two years, the city of Wichita donated \$750.00 for the "poor hospital," a sum which certainly relieved the situation somewhat.

It was also the farmers in and around Wichita, Aleppo, Ost, Colwich, and other places who, having come to the hospital, found German Sisters there, and learning of their poverty, provided them with farm products of every kind. The Sisters themselves went out to collect and in this manner became acquainted with the Betzen family, who later gave five daughters as Sisters

to the community — Sisters M. Bartholomea, Aegidia, Domitilla, Gonzaga, and Anselma. The Springobs also were great benefactors of the community and gave to it two of their daughters — Sisters M. Cornelia and Jacoba.

Since they had no money to buy milk, the Sisters asked some of the farmers for a cow. They returned from the country with not only one but two cows and a calf. The next problem was a fence and a barn, so that the animals would not wander away. Again the good bishop came to their rescue with \$100.00 to erect a shelter, and to the amazement of all, whom did they see driving the fence posts into the ground? Bishop Hennessy!

With hardly any income and the rent to be paid each month, as well as the daily expenses, Mother Frances found it necessary to send Sister Columba and another Sister to the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin, in the summer of 1890 to solicit alms for the hospital. On their tour they met Father Paul Geyer, a priest from Marshfield, and Father Louis Kaluza from Menomonie, Wisconsin. After inquiring about the community of which the Sisters were members, and upon hearing that the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother had a hospital in Wichita, Kansas, they considered this meeting a special favor of Divine Providence, because both priests had been seeking Sisters to conduct a hospital in their respective parishes.

Upon their return to Wichita, the two Sisters related to Mother Frances their experiences and the requests of the two priests for hospitals. In order to be assured of the matter and obtain needed information on the projects, she sent Sister Scholastica and a companion back to Wisconsin to visit the respective priests and ascertain details of the desired establishments.

Sister Scholastica and her companion returned with the following report:

Father Kaluza said if we come to him, there is a large vacant house which used to be the poorhouse, and if Father Geyer does not yet have a house ready for the Sisters, both those for Menomonie and for Marshfield can come to him and wait till Father Geyer has a house ready for them. He

added, the Sisters in Wichita should get ready; he would get the poorhouse into a little better condition, etc., and then send a telegram for all to come.<sup>8</sup>

After some correspondence and after receiving the necessary factual information on important matters relating to the establishment of the new institutions, Mother Frances formally accepted Marshfield on August 3, and Menomonie on September 21, 1890. The Sisters immediately began making preparations, and toward the end of September, Mother Frances and the Sisters appointed for Menomonie and Marshfield, having packed many articles necessary for divine service, set out from Wichita upon the journey for their new missions.

Father Kaluza, pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Menomonie, was at the depot to welcome them and take them to his school Sisters, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, of La Crosse, with whom they stayed for one or two days, and by whom they were treated most kindly and hospitably. Not wishing to impose upon them any longer than absolutely necessary, and anxious to begin their work, Mother Frances and the Sisters asked to be directed to their future mission of charity.

Arriving at the poorhouse late in the afternoon, they had to prepare for the night's rest. There were no blankets or anything of the kind, but they found some straw which they scattered on the floor of one of the rooms. The young Sisters did not mind having no covering for the night, but they felt sorry for Mother Frances who had lately been ill. While they were prayerfully looking for something to cover her for the night, Father Kaluza's big dog, which had followed them into the house, walked up to Mother Frances and lay peacefully at her feet, keeping them warm. There was a stove in the room but nothing wherewith to make a fire until the next day when they gathered wood.

The next morning they had to walk quite a distance to church, and after that they set about making the house habitable. Old bedsteads were found in the garret, and Sister Pia, expert seamstress, made mattresses. There was plenty of wood for the wood

stoves, but no furnace or basement. Although the Sisters did whatever they could to furnish the house, they could not buy on credit, as they were strangers in Menomonie and the people did not trust them. Finally, after receiving some money from Wichita, they were able to buy the necessary equipment, and the little institution was named "St. Mary's Hospital."

Late one evening, there was a knock at the door and who was there but Father Kaluza and the Most Rev. Kilian Flasch, Bishop of La Crosse! They were conducted through the little hospital, and the bishop, overjoyed at what he saw, gave the Sisters his blessing and expressed his appreciation for the work they were doing.

Gradually patients came, and through them the Sisters became acquainted with the people of Menomonie. Farmers also offered products from their farms and from this time on there was sufficient food for all.

About their early days at Menomonie, Sister Sebastiana writes:

No matter what happened, nothing interfered with our happiness. We were always satisfied with everything, even with hunger and deprivation, and full of joy. Those days will ever remain unforgettable. When Mother Frances was around, our happiness was complete. She took everything so calmly, never complained about anything, and we never saw her excited no matter what happened. She walked with us every morning to church. No one would suspect that she was our Mother because she acted just like any of us. She did not want to be introduced, but out of politeness we did, sometimes. We were ever ready to do anything she wished us to do.<sup>9</sup>

The mission at Menomonie was to have served, in the plans of Mother Frances, as an educational center for the Sisters. Already in the very early days, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration who taught in the school were engaged as teachers to conduct classes with the Sisters on Saturdays, so that they might obtain a better command of the English language. Moreover, the mother-house of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration was located in the city of La Crosse, to which place the Sisters could be sent for necessary education.

Mother Frances had already planned for a new hospital to be built in later years in Menomonie, but the two cities of Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire, each only about twenty miles distant, built hospitals of their own, and the projected plans had to be dropped in 1898 and the hospital given up. In June, 1898, in response to the pastor of St. Felix Church, Wabasha, Minnesota, who greatly desired a hospital and orphanage in that city, all the Sisters' belongings were shipped to Wabasha and their work at St. Mary's Hospital in Menomonie was discontinued.

When Marshfield was incorporated as a city in 1883, it was already a prosperous and progressive village of 3,435 inhabitants, that boasted of a furniture factory, stave and hub factories, boiler works, harness shops, hotels, and nineteen saloons. Most of the credit went to Mr. W. H. Upham, who owned an enormous sawmill for the purpose of sawing timber, so profuse in that part of the country, and who was therefore called the builder of the "sawmill city" of Marshfield. Many of the early log houses had already been replaced by solid brick buildings.

A huge fire, caused by sparks from a locomotive, was kindled in the lumber piles in the center of the city on June 27, 1887, and burned all day, spreading to all parts of the city; by evening two hundred and fifty buildings were destroyed, and people feared that the city of Marshfield was a thing of the past. But to their joyful surprise, the next morning Old Glory was waving frantically on its pole before Hope Hall, opposite the home of Mr. Upham, the only one of his buildings that had escaped the fire.

All eyes now turned toward Mr. Upham, and with grim determination everyone went to work rebuilding the city. Within a year, Mr. Upham had sixty-two houses under construction.

Undaunted by this calamity, a group of citizens in 1889 united to arouse interest among the people for a hospital to be built by the city. The *Marshfield News*, published in English and German, carried the articles and appealed to the good will of the people. The estimated cost would be \$35,000 to \$50,000.

Rev. Paul Geyer, who had been appointed pastor of St. John's Parish on the north side of Marshfield in September, 1889, be-

came the leader in the hospital project. After much discussion among those interested in the hospital project, the unanimous opinion that emerged was that a religious community of women experienced in hospital work be requested to build their own hospital, and that the land be donated by volunteers, as the city had lately suffered such devastating losses from the fire.

When Sister Scholastica and her companion, sent by Mother Frances, met with Father Geyer, they discussed the whole matter with him, informing him that they were penniless and at present could do nothing except send Sisters. Father Geyer suggested obtaining a loan, promising to attend to the legal matters, as well as to the planning and construction of the hospital. To this project Mother Frances officially gave her approval on August 3, 1890, entrusting the whole building project to Father Geyer, and asking him to build as cheaply as possible and to name the first building which they would erect in America "St. Joseph's Hospital."

The site of the hospital was not yet assured; the plan first proposed, to secure the city park grounds across from St. John's Church, met with violent opposition and had to be abandoned. Negotiations were then made for ten acres of land across the road from the cemetery for \$1,000, which sum had to be raised by those interested in obtaining a hospital.

According to the contract, the building was to be ready for occupancy on December 1, 1890, but it soon became evident that this was an impossible dream. Father Geyer then rented a two-story building near St. John's Church on North Central Avenue as a temporary hospital and convent for the Sisters.

The day arrived, Tuesday, December 9, 1890, when Mother Frances and five Sisters arrived at the Marshfield depot to begin their labor of love amid the people of Marshfield. Father Geyer was there to welcome them and to conduct Mother Frances and the Sisters to the rented house. It was soon put in order as a temporary hospital, to receive as many as six patients. But as in the other places, the people preferred to remain at home and have the Sisters do home nursing, for which they received food and twenty-five cents a day.

Finally the day came when the *Marshfield News* announced on February 2, 1891, that the Sisters of Charity had moved into the new St. Joseph's Hospital, and everything was ready to receive patients to the full capacity of the hospital. The basement was to provide living quarters for the Sisters, but when they moved in, the hospital was only half finished; the walls were unplastered, the floor was not laid, the heating plant was in poor condition, and the only water available was that which the Sisters pumped by hand into a tank in the attic.

Marshfield had not yet recovered from its recent catastrophe, the fire. Sister Agnes Eichfelder, who spent fifty years there, gives us her first impressions: ". . . frame houses and a few old huts could be seen; even the stores, the church, and the school were poor frame buildings. . . . Our hospital was built upon the worst piece of land, the whole of which consisted of hills, swamps, holes, and rocks."<sup>10</sup>

The big problem was from where to get the money to pay for the hospital. Patients were slow in coming and home nursing brought very little recompense. One man, a widower who worked in the sawmill, entrusted his five children to the care of the Sisters for one dollar and fifty cents per day. Records show that in the first year after it was opened, the hospital received four patients. A man from Oshkosh came and requested them to keep him for the rest of his life; in return he would give them all his savings, which amounted to three or four hundred dollars. Even though Mother Frances had brought some money from Rome, they could not pay off the loan, and what was worse, not even the interest on it.

On February 14, 1891, six more Sisters arrived from Rome to help staff the hospital. Since there were so few patients, they busied themselves with home nursing, preparing wood for the heating plant, cultivating a garden, and visiting homes in the city to collect funds and interest people in the hospital. People always gave generously of food and garden products which they had on hand.

There was at this time a young priest, Father Joseph Joch,



serving as pastor at St. Mary's Church, Auburndale, Wisconsin, with six missions attached to his parish. He was of Bohemian descent and had come to this country as a student for the priesthood, intending to serve his fellow Bohemian Catholics, who had few priests to minister to them. However, two days after his ordination by Bishop Flasch in La Crosse, on September 8, 1886, he was appointed assistant to Father Schaller, pastor of St. John's Congregation, Marshfield; one month later he was made pastor of Auburndale and its attendant missions. The first thing he attempted at Auburndale was the erection of a parish school. He obtained Sisters from Mother M. Alexia, O.S.F., at St. Joseph's Convent, Milwaukee, gave them the priest's house as a convent, and of necessity for himself, slept in the sacristy under an umbrella. During the influenza of 1888, he succumbed to a physical breakdown and for a time accepted Mother Alexia's offer to stay at their convent in Milwaukee for rest and recuperation.

In 1892, however, the new Bishop of La Crosse, Rt. Rev. James Schwebach, advised him to go to Woerrishofen, Bavaria, to try the Kneipp Water Cure, study it, and possibly bring it to this country. Since Mother M. Alexia was suffering from rheumatism, she and some other Sisters also decided to try this remedy. With an introductory letter from Bishop Schwebach, they spent the summer of 1892 in Bavaria, studying and experiencing the Kneipp Cure, with a view to establishing a possible sanatorium in the United States. They returned September 10, 1892, and Father Joch went to Milwaukee, continuing to make plans for a Kneipp Water Cure Sanatorium to be conducted by the Sisters in Milwaukee. These plans were rudely shattered when Bishop Schwebach sent him to Marshfield to help the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.<sup>11</sup>

During the time he was pastor at Auburndale, Father Joch had been appointed extraordinary confessor to the Sisters in the newly erected St. Joseph's Hospital. On his first visit there, he met Mother Frances, who impressed him so favorably that this meeting remained an indelible recollection. Thereafter he was frequently asked to do acts of charity for the Sisters, and because

of this Mother Frances wanted to give him something in return. But in his blunt, humorous way he answered, "Mother Frances, what of all things would you like to give me? You are poor as a church mouse and have nothing yourself."<sup>12</sup> Upon his return from Europe, he was appointed chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital and was told to devote himself to the interests of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. "I went to the Sisters at the wish of Bishop Schwebach," he related years later. "An unseen hand drew me to them like a magnet ever since the day I saw them in the train on the way to Auburndale, when the conductor wanted to put them off. Seeing their poverty and the way they lived, I had pity on them. I thought I could help them and in doing so, earn heaven for myself."<sup>13</sup>

He began his duties at St. Joseph's Hospital on December 15, 1892. Entering the house, he set down his suitcase and said, "Here I am." In later years he recalled, "I never had such a hearty welcome in all my life. I was received with open arms, figuratively speaking."

Something had to be done about the patient situation, and so Father Joch started the ticket insurance system which required of each person the annual pay of five or ten dollars. In case of sickness or accident, those insured would receive free care throughout the year.

Finally the thought struck him — the *Water Cure*! Hastily he called the Sisters together and began to teach them the necessary knowledge of its application. With advertisements being widely circulated in many papers, people came from far and near to try the hydrotherapeutic treatments. The proceeds of the Kneipp Cure settled the financial difficulties of St. Joseph's Hospital and soon it began to develop into the amazing health care institution we view today.

Hardly had the Sisters moved into their semi-completed hospital in Marshfield, struggling for their existence and livelihood there, when the news reached Oshkosh that there was a new hospital in Marshfield with German nursing Sisters in charge, who

also went out to homes to nurse patients when called upon to do so.

When Father Roman Scholter, pastor of St. Mary's Parish, Oshkosh, heard of this, he immediately set out, in February, 1891, for Marshfield, to convince himself of the truth of the situation and to ascertain whether or not there might be a like possibility for Oshkosh, with a population of over 17,000 people, the third largest city in the State of Wisconsin. He was a man of imposing personality, resolute and earnest, with an indomitable will, and it was his desire to have a hospital owned and conducted by Sisters, where it would be easier to minister to the spiritual needs of the sick as well as to assure them the best of physical care.

Upon meeting Mother Frances, he stated his request, pleading most earnestly with her to send Sisters to Oshkosh as soon as possible to begin a hospital there. Without losing her composure, she stood quite aghast at this new request. A fourth hospital within the space of two years, with no funds available, and even the interest on the Marshfield loan continually looming overhead like an ominous cloud; this was an impossibility! And besides, if the Sisters were to become efficient in hospital work and health care, they would first have to be sent somewhere to study in order to qualify themselves for various positions demanded in hospitals. All these thoughts raced through the mind of Mother Frances as she listened to Father Scholter's entreaties. She tried to explain that it was impossible at this time. But when Father Scholter presented to her the great need of the Church in America at that time, namely, religious institutions, especially hospitals and schools staffed by religious, so that souls might be saved in a country being so rapidly populated by immigrants from European countries, his arguments won the day. After much prayer to good St. Joseph, Our Blessed Mother and many other saints, Mother Frances accepted this offer and promised to send Sisters to Oshkosh for a new hospital.

Father Scholter had assured Mother Frances of the four lots opposite St. Mary's School and Church in Oshkosh, on the corner of Merritt and Boyd Streets, on which stood an old two-story

building, the Koebbler building, formerly a store and saloon. An excellent organizer and businessman, he directed the remodeling of the building, so as to make it suitable for a hospital, and also donated six hundred dollars toward defraying the cost of the project. A hot-air furnace, a water system, and bathrooms were installed. The Sisters bought and paid for the furniture — \$2,980.00 — with money from loans and collections. The first small hospital could house fifteen patients.

On Wednesday, February 25, 1891, after much prayer to St. Joseph, Mother Frances, Sister Scholastica, and Sister Alphonsa Boell came to Oshkosh to the house which they named "St. Mary's Hospital." What they found is told by Sister Alphonsa, who gives a graphic picture of their first evening at the new mission:

We arrived toward evening and found an empty house. We had no bed, no table, no chair, no dishes except three yellow crocks and one spoon for each, which we had brought along. Built on to the house was an old shed, and behind it was the woodshed. It was in the little shed that we ate, sitting on boxes, for about a week. A couple of blankets we had brought along with us, and with these we slept on the floor, Mother Frances with us.<sup>14</sup>

A few days later, four other Sisters arrived from Marshfield: Sisters M. Boniface Goetz, Gabriela Ortlieb, Salesia Rebhan, and Anna Niegel. All helped together to make the house resemble a hospital, and in about two weeks a few patients came. The Sisters also did home nursing which, as in all the other places to which they were called, meant cooking, housework, and all other menial tasks around the house, besides taking care of the children.

The Dominican Sisters from Racine who taught at St. Mary's School across the street gladly came over to the hospital to share with the early pioneer Sisters their knowledge of English and other branches of learning necessary in a new country.<sup>15</sup>

The Sisters always felt privileged to begin their difficult first days in a new mission with their foundress right in their midst. They observed her calm, peaceful way of living in the midst of the

most dire poverty and deprivation, knowing that she must now be experiencing what she so ardently longed for, even back in the *Maria Stern* convent — a life of complete Franciscan poverty, spent in active service to others, combined with deep contemplative prayer.

During the time that the Sisters were renting the house in Marshfield, waiting for occupancy of the new building, Mother Frances was called to Wichita on business. We may readily surmise that many difficulties must have arisen for the pioneers struggling for existence, as well as many questions which no one except the foundress herself could answer.

One of the questions concerned the garb of the Sisters, especially the veil. Hitherto they had worn a soft, black veil over an unstarched head covering, but evidently Bishop Hennessy suggested very strongly that they make a change. By using starch in the front pleat of the wimple and lining the veil with a starched white strip, Mother Frances made the change and even the doctors commented, "That's much better than before."

Another matter that caused Mother Frances great suffering and almost brought disaster upon the community was the fact that Bishop Hennessy, despite his benevolence toward the hospital and the Sisters in Wichita, wanted the community to be entirely under his jurisdiction. He wanted Mother Frances and Msgr. Jacquemin to separate from Rome and become an American foundation, establishing the motherhouse in Wichita, as it would have been easier, in his estimation, for the community to develop without restrictions from Old World ties. Others also, among them parish priests, urged the Sisters to adapt their constitutions and religious discipline to the demands and conditions of American life, which did not always harmonize with European standards. Even some of the Sisters, including Sisters Scholastica and Mechtildis, gave the idea consideration and favored the plan.

Alarmed upon hearing of it, Mother Frances cut short all discussions with the priests and returned to Rome. Many of those who desired the separation were influenced more by matters of temporary concern for their present establishments than for any

other reason. They needed Sisters as teachers for parish schools as well as nurses for hospitals, and reasoned that a less severe and austere rule would draw more postulants to the community. But Mother Frances strenuously objected to any departure from the principles of life as observed in the motherhouse in Rome, and for that reason terminated her stay in America.

Already in the beginning of 1891, she had made arrangements for her return trip to Europe, and on March 14, accompanied by Sister Columba, returned via Norddeutscher Lloyd to Europe, arriving in Bremen, Germany, on March 23. On April 3, she arrived with two postulants at the motherhouse.

To the great astonishment of the Sisters at the motherhouse in Rome, Mother Frances arrived there unannounced, wearing the new veil. The change of veil was made immediately by all, before anyone had occasion to appear outside the convent. It happened at the time that Sister Wendelina Bauer, who became the third superior general, had just arrived as a postulant and was waiting for several hours in the parlor. Much to her amazement she discovered that she had joined a community in which even the question of the religious dress was not yet settled. It was a great satisfaction to the foundress that all the Sisters in Rome were unanimous in their desire to be real religious, and she was happy to inform the Sisters in America of this. "All are again united," she wrote to them.

During this time, toward the end of 1890, an oil painting of the Sorrowful Mother, ascribed to an artist of the school of Guido Reni, was discovered in a Roman antique shop by Msgr. Jacquemin and artist Andreas Behr, whom the Monsignor had asked to paint a suitable portrait of the Mother of Sorrows. The purchase was soon made, and with joy Mr. Behr brought the picture to the motherhouse, where it was placed on the altar in the chapel. On both sides of the head were found two small holes through which a crown could be fastened, and from this it was evident that the picture at one time had enjoyed public veneration. It now became a visible sign of Mary's love and protection for the community in its time of need.

Mother Frances remained with the Sisters in Rome for three months, instructing them in the religious life and aiding them in a renewal of spirit, as these Sisters were for the most part young women, novices and postulants, who had lately come into community life. The community itself, from its very inception, was only eight years old, and most of the early members had gone to America, to work in the rapidly expanding mission field. Although she was needed in Rome, Mother Frances decided to go to America a second time. Taking with her eleven Sisters, she left Rome on June 4, 1891, via Antwerp, June 13, and arrived in New York ten days later. For Sister Columba, one of the eleven, this was also a second trip to America.

As she visited the missions, to her great satisfaction, Mother Frances personally experienced the joy of seeing the fruit of her labors, the great effort made by all the Sisters to live prayerfully amid the hectic labors of apostolic service, in a truly Franciscan manner.

Even in 1890, she and Msgr. Jacquemin had recognized the need of a civil corporation in order to carry on the business activities connected with the works of charity. *The Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother Corporation* was formed with the principal office in Wichita, Kansas, for the purpose of "buying and selling real estate, operating and conducting a hospital for the sick and for nursing the sick in and out of the hospital." The copy in Msgr. Jacquemin's handwriting bears the date of June 19, 1890, signed by Mother M. Frances Streitel, Sister Scholastica Demer, Sister Pia Hagemann, Sister M. Sebastiana Hoerling, Sister M. Bonifatia Goetz, Joseph Mosbacher, H. H. Debrecht, and M. Stanton.

The next corporation in the community was *The Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother*, with residence in Marshfield, Wisconsin. The Articles of Incorporation were again signed by Mother Frances — Amalia Streitel, known as Sister Francisca. Seven other incorporators signed in the presence of Rev. Roman Scholter and O. C. Weisbrod, evidently at St. Mary's Hospital in Oshkosh, on July 18, 1891. They were Sisters M. Scholastica Demer, M. Hildegard Ankenbrand, M. Anna Niegel, M. Theresia Henneberger, M.

Josephina Schleicher, M. Bonifatia Goetz, and M. Aquinata Kropp. The purpose of this corporation was somewhat more inclusive than the previous one.

Mother Frances was also greatly interested in the education of youth. She had been trained as a teacher and had spent many years in teaching and school-related administrative positions. Seeing the pioneer conditions existing in the newly opened West, she tried by every means during the early founding years to obtain teachers for each mission and to equip the Sisters with the necessary education for their work in the New World. In Menomonie the Sisters who were under the tutelage of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration made rapid progress in their studies. Sister M. Sebastiana relates that the pastor of St. Joseph's Parish at Menomonie gave them a regular examination and that they all got "good marks."

But as it always happened, the good pastor of some parish needed Sisters so desperately for his parish school, that he could not wait until the Sisters had the necessary education, and pleaded for help from the superior, saying that piety and zeal for souls would supplement what was lacking in education. Much of the rural population was of German descent, and in those pioneer days educational requirements were not at a high level. Most of the teaching was done in a one-room school, which was later partitioned off into two rooms. Under conditions such as these, Father John Loevenich, former pastor of St. Anthony's Parish in Wichita, was most urgent in his request for teaching Sisters for his new parish at Ost, Kansas, and the newly established mission at Aleppo, about ten miles distant, both about thirty miles from Wichita.

Mother Frances acceded to his wishes and accepted these two schools. Sister Carolina Kuenstle, who had been educated by the School Sisters of Notre Dame before her entrance into the Community of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, had charge of the educational program of the schools, with some of the younger Sisters as assistants and practice teachers.<sup>16</sup> After some years the Sisters withdrew because of a lack of personnel, and the schools



passed into the charge of the Sister Adorers of the Most Precious Blood.

Another of the early attempts at rural schools accepted by Mother Frances in 1891 was the little mission of Bakerville, near Marshfield, Wisconsin. Yielding to the repeated requests of Father Geyer, whose mission it was, for one Sister to teach where, as he said, "Almost everything is German," Mother Frances asked Sister Sebastiana to undertake this mission. Together with a companion Sister, she was to stay at the Nuber family and return to Marshfield every weekend, the farmers taking turns transporting them. But as time went on, the good farmers forgot and the Sisters often had no transportation. Shortly before Christmas the decision was made to discontinue the little one-room school, as the Sisters were urgently needed elsewhere. Years later, however, they returned.

An orphanage connected with St. Francis Hospital, Wichita, was in charge of the Sisters of Mercy as long as they conducted the hospital, but when these Sisters left the hospital, the orphans were left in the care of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. Bishop Hennessy wanted the Sisters to begin an orphanage separate from the hospital, and he gave his own house for the purpose. Both floors were completely partitioned off, the front for the bishop and the rear for the Sisters and orphans. Each side had its own entrance. Thus the building, very large and roomy, was so divided that the Sisters had complete privacy with the children.

The Sisters took charge of this St. John's Orphanage in the fall of 1893. Sister Joachim was the superior; Sister Stephanie cooked for the bishop and also for the Sisters and children; Sister Sebastiana cared for the children. The bishop had no housekeeper, but there was a man in charge of the premises. The number of orphans increased from three to about fourteen, of all ages. When the bishop was at home, the Sisters and the orphans attended Holy Mass in the chapel, but this was of rare occurrence, as the bishop was frequently gone on tours, both for the performance of his episcopal duties as well as for soliciting alms. During these absences the Sisters went to St. Anthony's Church or to Mt. Carmel

Academy. The orphanage was cold and uncomfortable, although the bishop tried in every way to make it function. Since it was on the way from St. Mark's in the country, the farmers always brought food and vegetables to it when they passed by. However, because the house was not equipped to take both boys and girls, and the Sisters wished to take girls only, as a result, no new girls came after the older ones left. No one wanted families to be separated. The orphanage was then discontinued about a year after it had started, and the bishop, having moved out, sold the house to the Sisters of the Precious Blood for a school.<sup>17</sup>

A young girl who had been staying at the hospital while attending St. Boniface School in Wichita, spent some months at the orphanage before returning home in the spring of 1894. She was one of the five Betzen girls who later joined the community, and as Sister Aegidia, had clear memories of this time and of Mother Frances, about whom she wrote:

Even Mother Frances was at our home several times. She watched my mother in the kitchen and asked her how she prepared certain dishes. This, and her whole behavior edified my parents very much. When Mother Frances had left they spoke about her, saying, "That is a simple, affable, holy person. In her there is no pride."<sup>18</sup>

After a brief stay of a little more than three months in America, Mother Frances left again for Europe on September 3, 1891, taking with her Sister Scholastica, as she had already caused considerable difficulty in both Wichita and Oshkosh. On her return to Rome, Mother Frances went first to Germany, bringing six postulants to the motherhouse. Despite her weak health, she had again braved the ordeal of seasickness, even though it had caused her much suffering. She was now in her forty-seventh year and was suffering from physical ailments, aggravated by the frequent travels and the anxiety over the newly established mission houses. But loving God as she did, she desired nothing else but to be spent in loving service to Him and to her fellowbeings. On November

24, she sent Sister Johanna back to America as her representative, together with a group of seven Sisters.

As yet, the congregation had no foundation in a German-speaking country. Mother Frances greatly desired an establishment with the possibility of a novitiate house in such a place, so that all the postulants would not need to go to Rome, where the adverse effects of Italy's climate had impaired the health of many of the young Sisters. In the hope of establishing a novitiate outside of Italy, she began negotiating with the Most Rev. Francis Leopold von Leonard, Bishop of Eichstaett, and with the officials of Abenberg, Bavaria, concerning an anticipated foundation at the Marienburg in that city. It was from Germany that the majority of vocations to the community had hitherto come, and many of the young ladies would rather have entered a convent in their native country than one in a foreign land.

Although the ecclesiastical authorities and the officials of Abenberg made great efforts to help the Sisters establish themselves in the then vacant convent of Marienburg, and although the Sisters had offered to buy the property, their efforts were in vain at the time. Even the earnest request of Sister Johanna, a cousin of Baron Johann Lutz, Prime Minister of Bavaria, went unheeded. The Bavarian government withheld its approval, and not until 1920 did the desired establishment in Abenberg become a reality.

In the meantime God had other plans for the community.<sup>19</sup> During a pilgrimage from Vienna to Rome, a group of pilgrims stayed at the motherhouse, among whom were two ladies of the nobility, Marie and Elise Kuppelwieser, who were greatly impressed with the spirit of charity reigning among the Sisters. Hearing of their desire for an establishment in a German-speaking country, they promised to do all they could to support the project, as they greatly desired that the Sisters establish a house in Vienna. Mother Frances rejoiced at this turn of events and decided to send Sister Scholastica and a companion to Vienna to investigate the prospects.

On November 21, 1892, the two left Rome, arriving in Vienna on November 24. They stayed for a day with the Kuppelwiesers,

in order to discuss ways and means of winning state approval. After that the kind Sisters of the Sacred Heart at the convent on the Rennweg gave them shelter until February, 1893. Although the ecclesiastical authorities were kindly disposed toward the Sisters, they could do nothing to help them; the initial aid would have to come from the noble ladies of the court. At Bishop Angerer's suggestion the Sisters were introduced to some of the noble ladies, including Countess Coudenhove. These ladies were sympathetic, but again, it was the same story — the Austrian government had just given orders that no new religious orders be admitted, as there were already enough convents in the city.

Mother Frances must indeed have been praying for the Sisters when they heard this, for about five o'clock that same day, the imperial carriage stopped at the convent of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart with a message to send one of the Roman Sisters to Countess Coudenhove, as she had had an accident and needed a nurse. With a fearful heart, because of her inexperience in nursing, one of the Sisters went to the Countess, whose sprained ankle required the application of a compress every five minutes, followed by massaging of the foot. Between applying the compresses, the Sister used the time to pray a decade of the rosary.

Since the Countess was also the governess of the Emperor's granddaughter, he naturally came to see her. To the surprise and joy of all, the Countess obtained from him his consent to the new foundation.

As more Sisters arrived, they rented a room at the home of two elderly ladies on *Baeckerstrasse*, No. 14, engaged in home nursing and accepted whatever people were willing to give them as alms in return. On February 1, 1893, Mother Frances purchased a small house at No. 175 *Simmeringer Hauptstrasse* for the mission. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart gave them twelve beds and mattresses, a table and several chairs, all in good condition; other benefactors also contributed, among them members of the Emperor's household. The contributions from the Emperor enabled them to enlarge the small house into a sizeable convent.

How happy Mother Frances was when she made her first visit

to Vienna! The Sisters were happy in the true Franciscan spirit of poverty and in their prayerful service to the sick. On the third day after her arrival, the Sisters received the approval of the Austrian government. Plans were made to tear down a small, old building in order to build a new convent. The Sisters cared for the sick in their homes and began training for the work carried on later in kindergarten and sewing schools.

While the mission in Vienna was being established, Baroness von Hasslinger, a resident of Vienna, asked Mother Frances to take charge of an establishment which she intended to found at Lussingrande on the Island of Lussin, south of Istria in the Adriatic Sea, for children of Vienna who were suffering from scrofula and rickets. Mother Frances gladly accepted the offer, as this was entirely in conformity with her sentiments of compassion and love for the poor, the sick, and especially for suffering orphans. The Sisters took charge of the asylum on May 5, 1893, and were received with great joy. Besides giving physical and spiritual care to the children, they also taught religion, reading, and writing. Unfortunately, the events of World War I necessitated the closing of this mission.

In the spring of 1893, Mother Frances accepted charge of the St. Mathilda Home near Vienna. This was a resort for women, especially teachers, who needed relaxation and recuperation. It was open from May to September, and for two summers the Sisters offered their services, thereafter withdrawing because they were needed elsewhere.

In 1894, the Sisters took charge temporarily of the Maria Theresa Hospital for women in Vienna, in return for board and cash compensation. Mother Frances wrote to Father Joch in a letter of May 9, 1894, "In Vienna our Sisters are taking over the management of a hospital for women. They receive free maintenance and monthly pay there." Because of the great need for Sisters in America they withdrew in 1899.

In America the Wisconsin establishments were increased by two in 1893. Northern Wisconsin, the land of beautiful lakes and silver streams, which is now the tourist attraction of a great part

of the country, was at that time a wild, desolate, almost impenetrable forest area. The few settlements which existed were built around a railroad station and consisted of a general store, a saw-mill, a blacksmith shop, a few scattered houses, sometimes a small church, and always several saloons. During the winter the woods teemed with activity as lumbermen felled trees, dressed the logs, and piled them up along the river banks, to be floated down to the mill when the ice and snow melted in spring. Inevitably, there were many accidents connected with this activity, but there were few hospitals where the injured could be treated and lives saved, as transportation was slow and trains infrequent. Unsanitary conditions in the lumber camps helped breed disease, and patients died for lack of medical care. Spiritual care was difficult and sometimes impossible when accidents happened in the forests.

The first initiative toward a Sisters' hospital in Rhinelander has been credited to Father Nicholas July, pastor of St. Mary's Church. The first actual negotiations, however, were carried on with the Bay Shore Provident Company in Menominee, Michigan. This we gather from the correspondence between Msgr. Jacquemin and Father Joch in the first half of 1893. Just what the first contacts with the Company were is not known, but at the end of December, 1892, C. H. Ludwig, manager of the Company, informed Msgr. Jacquemin of the terms of a proposed contract with the Sisters for a hospital to be erected in Rhinelander by the Company and staffed by the Sisters. The Company would provide the building with heat and light and furnish medicine and medical attendance, while the Sisters would provide nursing care, food, and labor necessary for the care of the patients.

In reply to this, Msgr. Jacquemin informed the Company on March 10, 1893, that five Sisters could be spared, and the Company's proposal would be accepted in substance, provided permission would be given by the Bishop of Green Bay and the pastor in Rhinelander. It was understood by Monsignor that only patients with common diseases and those requiring ordinary surgery would be admitted. A week later Msgr. Jacquemin wrote to Father Joch, giving a complete account of his dealings with the Company and

stating that he had written to the pastor, whom he presumed was still Father Nicholas July. He then asked Father Joch, in his and Mother Frances' name, to look over the situation again before concluding the deal and to act according to what he thought best. He made it clear, however, that the Sisters were to become self-reliant later.

Having begun negotiations with the Company while still in America, Msgr. Jacquemin had returned to Rome in February, 1893, and now relied on Father Joch to continue the deal. Father Joch lost no time in evaluating the situation and decided that it would be far better for the Sisters to build the hospital themselves. To this the superiors in Rome readily agreed, for on May 9, Msgr. Jacquemin wrote, "Do all you can so that the Sisters themselves build a hospital and are in no way dependent on the Company." A year later, on May 9, Mother Frances again urged Father Joch to do the same: "Build in Rhinelander. Get the money for the building under favorable circumstances."

Although the new hospital did not become a reality until 1895, Father Joch meanwhile planned to purchase four plots and erect a frame house costing no more than \$5,000, including furnishings. For this, too, he received approval from the motherhouse in Rome, through a telegram saying, "All right." Permission from Bishop Messmer of Green Bay and from the pastor, Father July, was obtained in due time, and it was then decided that the Sisters take up temporary residence in a frame house on the corner of King and Pelham Streets. It had been Rhinelander's first hospital, started by Dr. John M. Dodd in 1889 and continued by Drs. A. D. Daniels and T. B. McIndoe. When Sisters Pia Hagemann, Petronilla Derleth, and Virginia Boch arrived from Marshfield on June 5, 1893, a few of the rooms were still occupied by a family. When the family moved out, the vacated rooms were available for patients.

The beginnings of this hospital were again marked with dire poverty. The Sisters endured cold, hunger, and want of every kind; but Mother Frances had impressed upon them the fact that

every new beginning must be rooted in the cross if it is to grow and bring forth fruit, fruit that shall last (Cf. John 15:16).

As elsewhere, the Sisters did home nursing in the beginning, but after Father Joch introduced the ticket system in the hospital, and when a typhoid epidemic broke out, there was no need to go to the homes. The hospital was filled with cots and beds to care for the victims of accidents and typhoid disease. Regardless of filth or vermin, the Sisters cheerfully rendered prayerful service to all the sick, whatever their creed, nationality, or position in life happened to be.

Father Joch's plan for a new hospital materialized with the purchase of five lots on the banks of the Pelican River, the site of the present St. Mary's Hospital. The purchase was dated July 12, 1893; the purchase price, \$1,125. The plans for the new hospital were purchased from the Messmer Company in Milwaukee, and in the fall of 1894, construction was begun on the two-story building. In July, 1895, it was completed.

Father Joch was now in the East, busy with a new establishment there. In June, Msgr. Jacquemin returned to the States and was soon informing Father Joch of the progress made with the new hospital. On July 1, he wrote: "Tomorrow the carpenters will complete their work. . . . As long as the water system in the new hospital cannot function, the patients will have to stay in the old hospital. It seems the city intends to pipe the water up to the hospital in a few months." On July 5, "In a few days the Sisters will move into the new hospital." And again, on July 11, "The day before yesterday we moved into the hospital."<sup>20</sup> As soon as all was in readiness, Msgr. Jacquemin blessed both the hospital and the chapel.

In August three more Sisters arrived to join the small nursing staff. Mother Frances herself, having arrived in the States in August, 1895, visited the new hospital in October. On the 25th she wrote to Father Joch, "For a few days I was very sick. It seems that I will have to become accustomed to the somewhat raw air in Wisconsin. The air here agrees with me better than that of Marshfield. But may the best and most healthful air be



that in which the performance of duty and accomplishment of the holy Will of God places me." Two days later she wrote again, asking his advice about disposing of the old hospital. The tenants were leaving because of inability to pay and only one prospect was at hand of selling under certain conditions. "There are a number of houses for sale in Rhinelander. No one buys them because there is a money shortage." It was a shortage of money which prompted her to plead with Father Joch to have a \$10,000 note extended to the middle of December.

Hardly had the Sisters begun work in Rhinelander when a petition for a hospital came from Tomahawk, about thirty miles southwest of Rhinelander. The pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Tomahawk was the Rev. Charles Hoogstoel, a Belgian priest who had immigrated to the United States and as pastor in Tomahawk had begun the construction of a new church for his parishioners in 1892. In the summer of 1893 he was one of the Kneipp Water Cure patients in Marshfield, and when he heard of the Rhinelander hospital from Father Joch, he immediately pleaded with him and the Sisters to start a hospital in Tomahawk. Since this city belonged to the Diocese of Green Bay at that time, he wrote to Bishop Messmer, asking him to recommend the project to Father Joch and the Sisters.

When assured of Bishop Messmer's consent and approval, Father Joch contacted Mother Frances in Rome. She responded on July 8, 1893, saying: "Today a telegram was sent to Marshfield stating 'Tomahawk accepted.'" Msgr. Jacquemin was absent from the motherhouse at the time but wrote a week later: "During my absence Reverend Mother sent the telegram about the acceptance of Tomahawk, because we had discussed the matter together beforehand and because it was evident from your communications as well as from Sister M. Johanna's that the acceptance of this place was of the utmost importance for our convent. That will give Your Reverence a great deal of work again. I wish I could share it with you by being there with you."

Five Sisters were assigned to this new undertaking in Tomahawk, and on October 19, 1893, they arrived there with Father

Joch — Sisters M. Anna Niegel, Alexia Bauer, Gabriela Ortlieb, Clementia Raes, and Dionysia Griebel. An old barroom had been rented to serve as a hospital, but it was so poorly suited for this purpose that a second house was soon rented from Mrs. Edward J. Roller, who moved out so that the Sisters and their two patients could move in.

The beginning in Tomahawk, as elsewhere, was marked by poverty, cold, hunger, and suffering, borne by the Sisters with patience and love for God and suffering humanity in the spirit of their foundress, Mother Frances. The difficulties, however, were offset by the Christian charity of the local community and the lumberjacks in the surrounding camps. In order to attract patients, agents were employed to sell hospital tickets, and for a short period even the Sisters went from camp to camp to sell the tickets and to solicit aid for the new hospital to be erected in 1894. Sister Dionysia recalled the following from her own experience:

When the men came home from work in the evening, the foreman would speak to them, telling them to be prepared for illness and to buy tickets from the Sisters. He praised our work highly. Then he would say: "The Sisters would like to build a hospital in Tomahawk, and for this purpose they would also like to take up a collection. Calling the men each by name, he would say, with paper in hand, on which their names were written: "John, how much may I put down for you? How much for you, George?" And so he went on until each of the men had promised his share. The foreman usually promised to give one or two dollars. When the woodmen saw this, they were also liberal and promised a dollar or two.

It must be said to the praise of the woodmen that they treated the Sisters with profound respect. They were polite and reverent and I can't remember having seen or heard one of them say a word or laugh at us. They were genuine, good men with fine manners.<sup>21</sup>

The land for the new hospital was donated by William H. Bradley, a prominent and well-to-do citizen of Tomahawk, who, as Mrs. Jacob Nick recalled, made this statement: "We are going

to keep these Sisters here and we are going to help them." When it was time to begin work on the site, an entire city block just north of the new parish church, the early settlers came with their teams to excavate the ground. Those who could not contribute one or two days of excavating, offered money.

The two-story building was completed in summer and dedicated on July 20, 1894. Through the efforts of some ladies, much food had been brought in for a public dinner served to those who had purchased tickets for the meal. The proceeds were a financial help for the Sisters, and the surplus food left from the dinner was shared between the Sisters in Tomahawk and Marshfield.

The hospital was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Already on November 5, 1893, Msgr. Jacquemin had written to Father Joch: "That the hospital in Tomahawk has come to be Sacred Heart Hospital afforded great joy to Reverend Mother and me. May all the Sisters and patients there belong entirely to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus."

In the same letter he went on to say: "In regard to Tomahawk, I ask you in Reverend Mother's name and in my own to arrange everything as you consider best for the interests of the Sisters."

That Father Joch did so, is clear from Sister Dionysia's recollections: "Father Joch had charge of everything. He came to us at least every two weeks and brought us consolation for soul and body. . . . Whenever he came, he taught us how to do our work perfectly."<sup>22</sup>

On November 1, 1894, four other Sisters were sent to Tomahawk, and a year later, both Mother Frances and Msgr. Jacquemin were there when several Sisters made profession of vows. The retreat preceding the profession on October 13 was given by Msgr. Jacquemin.

In spite of the close proximity of Tomahawk to Rhinelander, Sacred Heart Hospital continued to flourish.

Difficulties and problems grew in proportion to the growth and expansion of the community. Some of these problems stemmed from financial conditions caused by the rapid expansion of the hospitals and their need for equipment, as well as for additions

or replacements of original buildings. Other difficulties arose from a conflict of ideas. Although Mother Frances and Msgr. Jacquemin endeavored to work together for the good of the community and the mission houses, there were, nevertheless, differences of opinion.

When Msgr. Jacquemin was appointed spiritual director and temporal administrator of the community, he became its *ecclesiastical* superior in the name and by the authority of the higher ecclesiastical superior, the Cardinal Vicar himself. But according to the constitutions of 1885, "The Superior General is the Superior whom the Sisters must respect and obey, and whom they must love and trust as their mother." She was, that is, the *religious* superior, concerned with the internal religious life of the Sisters in accordance with the approved rules.

Msgr. Jacquemin would like to have been a teacher in a seminary or in some place where he could, as he said, "do much good." Having earned three doctorates in religious studies, he could easily have found such a position; but in obedience to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, he agreed to spend his life working for an obscure, newly founded religious community. He himself testifies in one of his letters that his sole aim was only the glory of God and the good of the Community of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, to help it develop according to the prescriptions of canon law.<sup>23</sup> As a doctor of canon law, he saw his position clearly as being the spiritual director of the young community as well as the administrator who was responsible for the material well-being of the new mission houses which were springing up so rapidly. He surveyed everything in the light of canonical legislation and acted according to its principles. After the community was no longer a diocesan institute, that is, in the year 1898, his position as administrator terminated; but he remained spiritual director until the end of his life in 1920.

Mother Frances, however, was the mother general, to whom were entrusted the confidences of the Sisters, and, knowing human nature from her long experience as superior in the *Maria Stern* convent, she also knew that she could not always act on the basis of legislation alone. She had to consider the problems and

difficulties of others, be they the Sisters or the personnel with whom they worked. She therefore often had to change Sisters from one house to another or appoint superiors whom she deemed more fitting, even though this did not seem the right course of action to others. We know from her letters to Father Joch that she was very discouraged and even contemplated making her future residence in America.

Since Father Joch had taken up his residence at the Marshfield hospital with the Sisters, both Mother Frances and Msgr. Jacquemin relied heavily on him to use his own judgment in regard to the establishments in America. This included not only fiscal matters but also matters concerning the transfer and appointment of Sisters as superiors and administrators, all of which naturally had to be done in consultation with and reported to the motherhouse. Since he was well acquainted with the American scene and proved himself an able and trustworthy acting administrator, he was often entrusted also with the spiritual concerns of the Sisters in America. He was the recipient of the complete confidence of Mother Frances as well as of Msgr. Jacquemin. It was at his suggestion that Mother Frances appointed Sister Johanna as her vicareess in America on November 5, 1893.

Some idea of Mother Frances' problems at this time is gained from her letter of December 20, 1893, to Father Joch:

Our Reverend Father is a very pious priest but he has no understanding of life in the branch houses. He thinks everything can remain as it was, as he arranged when he was in America, until he returns. With tears I asked about eight weeks ago to transfer some Sisters. He said, "Your idea of changing Sisters often, I do not share." And he reproved me for doing so when I was in America. I prayed. After 14 days the report came that Your Reverence had considered it best to change some Sisters in Oshkosh. Reverend Father was shocked. I used this opportunity and said, "Reverend Father, you must see that while you refused my request, God appointed Father Joch to fulfill it."

In spite of all this, my suggestion to remove Sister M. Mechtildis [Bauer] from Kansas was not granted. I prayed fervently to our Sorrowful Mother. Three days ago, in des-

peration I prayed: "Dear Mother of God, enlighten our Superior so that he will have the courage to remove Sister Mechtildis." The following day I requested that at least Sister M. Johanna be permitted to go to Kansas. "Not at present," was the reply. What happened? A letter from Marshfield brought the news that all my wishes were fulfilled. Our Reverend Father is too fearful of the displeasure of the bishops and priests.

In the same letter she wrote: "I am not free to act, but you, Reverend Father, can do so; and once more I beg you to do so."

To what lengths of desperation these conflicts must have driven her, the following lines portray:

All my thoughts are bent on coming to America to stay. I meet with many hindrances. If Sister Vicaress were here, I would leave Rome without saying a word and hasten to the West, there to work and spend my remaining days. . . . Please do not mention these remarks to our Reverend Father. I will end my days in America. This, my hope, lifts me above many pressing afflictions, over rough situations, and gives me courage to stand firm under the cross, to hope "against hope."

Thus did she write to Father Joch on October 29, 1894.

There were other problems in Wichita besides the transfer of personnel, which made St. Francis Hospital one of the still difficult spots in America. Economic conditions had not improved in that part of the country, and because of the financial crisis in the hospital, coupled with strained relations between the bishop and the superior, Mother Frances sent Father Joch a telegram: "*Sell and settle Wichita.*" With his usual tact, but with a heavy heart he went to Wichita. Years later he wrote:

When I arrived in Wichita in 1893, it looked like the abomination of desolation. Far out on the prairie stood a watch factory unfinished. It must have cost about a half million dollars. Streets were laid out in every direction for miles. In the city proper, they were in a pitiable condition; every few feet on the wooden sidewalks some boards were broken or missing. I remember Grand Avenue, on which

somebody was raising cabbage. Everybody was, if not down and out, at least downhearted, and to this place I was sent by Mother Frances, who sent a telegram to "sell and settle Wichita."

The St. Francis Hospital in Wichita looked like the rest of the city. The Sisters allowed one physician to run the hospital, and the rest of the physicians boycotted it. There was no income. The Sisters owed everybody.

I was not in a great hurry to sell the property, so I looked around and studied the prospects of Wichita. The city, I found was not all dead yet; on the contrary, I believed it had a great future, considering its location, the fertility of the land, and so forth. I thought it would be a great mistake to sacrifice the hospital after so many sacrifices of the Sisters, for I had already discovered that the harder the beginning, the better the prospects.<sup>24</sup>

Father Joch did not sell St. Francis Hospital. When Sister Seraphina Eberth replaced Sister Pia Hagemann as superior, and when the famous surgeon, Dr. Andrew H. Fabrique, became head of the surgical staff, the hospital was brought to a flourishing condition, and over the years continued to grow and develop into the outstanding institution it is today.<sup>25</sup>

That Mother Frances had problems also with difficult characters is evident from her letters to Father Joch. After Wichita was again settled, she wrote on October 10, 1894:

Sister Pia may have acted rightly in Kansas, but she did not conduct herself as a pious, modest religious should. I fear that such a firm attitude toward a church dignitary will have brought little blessing to her soul. She will merit no praise for this from Reverend Father.

On March 15, 1895, she wrote:

M. Columba, it seems, wants to be obstinate too and look elsewhere to see whether one can attain sanctity also through self-will and false humility. . . . Such souls always seek themselves, thereby disturbing the peace of the convent and being a burden to themselves and others.

Strangely, one of the most serious problems of Mother Frances

among the Sisters, and the one who became the greatest source of her suffering, was the Sister who had seen her in a dream and had become her first companion, Sister Scholastica. She was very capable and had been well educated before her entrance, having been a Dominican postulant in Landsberg, Bavaria, but at times she manifested instability, unpredictability, and a tendency to be easily swayed, with an indomitable craving for power. As she was one of the first companions of Mother Frances, she was easily swayed by her ideals and readily accepted the early austere life in Rome. But when she had to act on her own responsibility, she failed each time. In Wichita she had to be removed from the office of superior at the bishop's request. After a few months in Oshkosh, Father Roman Scholter also asked for her removal from office. In a historical record, which he wrote on September 13, 1894, and placed in the cornerstone of the new St. Mary's Hospital, his last sentence is this:

The first superior at the hospital (1891) was Sister Scholastica, but was moved on September 11 on account of her uncharitable behavior and despotic character.<sup>26</sup>

For this reason Mother Frances took her back to Europe in September, 1891. She had earlier thought of dismissing her from the community, but Msgr. Jacquemin was hopeful that she might possibly reform under his direction. Therefore, in spite of her previous failures, Mother Frances was willing to give her another chance in a culture less foreign to her. When the question of the new establishment in Vienna arose, she sent Sister Scholastica there to investigate and then appointed her as superior. Yet, she continued to be a source of concern for both Mother Frances and Msgr. Jacquemin, as well as for Sister Johanna. On September 9, 1894, Monsignor wrote to her:

Be faithful to your vocation, Venerable Sister M. Scholastica; be faithful with that steadfastness resembling the altar at which you offered your holy vows to God. Daily I pray for the Sisters in Vienna and send them the holy blessing.



Two months later, Sister Johanna seems to have had a foreboding of trouble in Vienna, for she addressed herself to Msgr. Jacquemin in a letter from Marshfield on November 11:

I am much concerned about Vienna, although I do not know how things are there. Oh, please send Reverend Mother soon and come soon, Your Reverence. I will then tell you orally why I so urgently beg. Oh, I fear that Sister M. Scholastica will come to no good end! Only the Lord knows how I feel.<sup>27</sup>

Earlier in the summer of 1894, difficulties had also arisen in the motherhouse. Msgr. Jacquemin had taken up residence there about the year 1887 in order to be closer to his sphere of work as spiritual director, administrator, and chaplain. His rooms were on the third floor next to the chapel.

Already before Sister Johanna was appointed vicaress in America in 1893, she had always endeavored to be very kind and friendly to Msgr. Jacquemin, for she knew what a sacrifice of his own interests the direction of the Sisters had cost him. Her motives, however, were misinterpreted. She was believed to be on too intimate terms with him, and as a result of envy and jealousy, gossip had sprung up, as gossip will. When it happened one time that on returning from a trip rather late in the evening she went to see Msgr. Jacquemin in his quarters to report on some matters, this action was unfavorably interpreted. Sister Scholastica, who had been reproved several times by the Monsignor, was easily influenced by some of the Sisters to write a letter to the Cardinal Vicar, accusing Msgr. Jacquemin of improper conduct.

As a result of these accusations, he was obliged to leave the community for a time in the summer of 1894. On July 22, Mother Frances wrote to Father Joch:

On the part of the Vicariate in Rome, word was sent to me that our Reverend Father, in keeping with the statutes of the Church, would be obliged to give up his position with the Sisters for a time. I did not have the courage to tell this to the Sisters. Both the Sisters of the motherhouse and those on the missions receive from me only the information that Reverend Father will be absent for a while.

She cautions Father Joch to keep the matter confidential.

Early witnesses among the Sisters tell that Msgr. Jacquemin suffered keenly under this trial. And what must Mother Frances have suffered! Indeed, she was nearing the climax of her suffering. Concerning the accusations, the Cardinal Vicar gave his word: "I can lay my hands on Msgr. Jacquemin's shoulders in testimony that as far as holy purity is concerned, he is innocent."

A canonical visitation was now ordered to be undertaken by the Reverend Fulgentius von Goosensass, General Definitior of the Capuchins, in the motherhouse. His report, dated August 28, 1894, stated that everything was in the best of order except that there should be three assistants to the superior general, a prescription which had not been observed heretofore. Accordingly, having heard the wishes and listened to the prudent counsel of several responsible Sisters, he recommended the following:

Superior General — Mother Frances Streitel  
First Assistant — Sister Scholastica Demer  
Second Assistant — Sister Stanisla Schoen  
Third Assistant — Sister Seraphina Eberth  
Mistress of Novices — Sister Valeria Wiczurke

Father Fulgentius could only act upon the testimony of the Sisters with whom he consulted. Not knowing the characters of the Sisters — not all were genuine religious — he made some erroneous recommendations which had dire results. He also recommended a different confessor to be appointed, who would have nothing to do with the internal affairs of the community.<sup>28</sup>

Upon the testimony of Father Fulgentius about the satisfactory conditions in the motherhouse, and upon the petition of Sister Seraphina Eberth to Msgr. De Waal, and surely the fervent prayers of Mother Frances, Msgr. Jacquemin was persuaded to again resume his office of spiritual director and administrator of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. That he debated this is evident from his letter to Father Joch, December 10, 1894, in which he wrote: "Upon the request made to me, to take up the direction of the Sisters again, I have accepted it temporarily. I

will tell you confidentially that I shall probably withdraw myself entirely for one or two years. I shall then work on the constitutions and take care of various things for the Sisters." He returned provisionally on September 7, 1894, as indicated in his letter to Sister Scholastica on the 9th, and in which he stated he had given his promise at the Vicariate to again take over the direction of the community.

During his absence Mother Frances had a suitable residence prepared for him on the first floor of the motherhouse near the entrance, with several rooms and a separate entrance as required according to church regulations. The Sisters themselves painted the rooms, especially his study, with symbols from the catacombs, such as the Good Shepherd, doves, lambs, fish, and various monograms, for which symbols he had a special liking.

When he returned in October at the persistent requests of Mother Frances and the Sisters, he was very happy about his new living quarters and hoped that the situation had improved. On January 13, 1895, he again held retreat and presided at the investing, and at the first and final professions.

On June 7, 1894, Mother Frances had been called by telegram to the deathbed of her beloved aged father. She departed immediately in company with her aunt, Rosa Hoerhammer, who since June, 1888, had been living in the motherhouse and had been helping the Sisters with their shopping and assisting them in the kitchen.

As government official, Mr. Streitel had been retired since 1884. His health was satisfactory, despite his advanced age, and in 1892 he and his wife celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, a joyous occasion for the Streitel family. On May 29, 1894, the good father became slightly ill and as a precaution had the Last Sacraments administered to him. Suddenly, on June 2, he was overtaken by a fainting spell, so that he could not take another step. Nonetheless, he was always conscious and just as contented and cheerful as ever, so that no one believed the end to be so near. He passed away peacefully in the Lord on June 9,

in his 86th year. From Bamberg, Mother Frances wrote to Msgr. Jacquemin on June 10:

With God's protection, I arrived in Bamberg yesterday afternoon at one o'clock. My dear father had passed away two hours before. His hands were still warm, and I was able to grasp them in filial veneration for the last time. His last days were full of suffering but also full of resignation to God. The Reverend Spiritual Director Hauptmann, his confessor, visited him often, praying with him always and directing his thoughts to things above. I have never seen a corpse portraying such deep peace as that of my beloved father. Those who saw him thought he was asleep. All were edified at his holy death. The grief of my dear 76-year-old mother is profound, and my brothers and sisters likewise can scarcely realize that they have lost such a good father. Tomorrow the remains will be consigned to the earth, and on Tuesday the funeral service will be held.

I earnestly beg you to pray for the repose of the soul of the departed and to offer the Holy Sacrifice for him. May the dear God grant his blessing on your own family, Reverend Father, for all you have done in merciful love for my relatives.

Be assured, Reverend Father, of my deep respect and of my prayers and sacrifices for the alleviation of your great sufferings. Entrusting our Sisters with all confidence to you, and sending them motherly greetings, I remain with greatest reverence,

Reverend Father's obedient spiritual daughter,  
*Mary Frances of the Cross.*

During the month of July, 1894, each mission received a large photograph of the picture of the Sorrowful Mother which had been found in an art shop in Rome and was venerated in the motherhouse chapel as the particular Sorrowful Mother image for the houses of the congregation. Marshfield was the first to receive one of the large prints, early in March, since from its beginning it had been considered the headquarters of the American houses. Large oil paintings, done by artists Andreas Behr and Giuseppe Gonella, were later sent to all the houses. Pope Leo XIII gave the precious picture a mark of distinction through the granting of a

special favor. In a brief of July 9, 1894, he granted an indulgence of 300 days once a day if the Sisters visited the picture of grace in the chapel; a plenary indulgence on Friday, feast of Our Lady of Sorrows in Passion Week, and also on the third Sunday in September, if in addition to the visit, the Sisters received the Sacraments. Two days previously, in another brief, he granted that the Sisters would gain indulgences each time by visiting their house chapel when the faithful are required to visit a public church.

During the early foundation days in Vienna, and also during the time that the new convent was being erected, the Sisters who were taking charge of it frequently had to live in places that were ill suited to prayer life, so that religious life suffered considerably under the circumstances. In addition to this was the fact that the Sisters were all young religious who had just made temporary vows; Sister Scholastica was the only one bound by perpetual vows, having made her final commitment in Wichita, Kansas. Combined with apostolic activity, such as home and hospital nursing, together with study and constant communication with the laity, especially the imperial court ladies, conventual discipline was quite neglected and frequent disorders crept in. After the Sisters moved into the new convent, Mother Frances, hearing of the situation from some of the Sisters at the mission, attempted to remedy the ills by sending a letter of admonition, written with love and kindness, every week or ten days to Sister Scholastica. She cautioned her, as the one in charge, in regard to conventual silence, punctuality in the daily routine, and the harmfulness of exclusive friendships, the many unnecessary trips to the city, and other like matters.

Instead of accepting the proffered admonitions, Sister Scholastica felt herself insulted, thinking that the superior general harbored antipathy toward her. Glibly, without disclosing any of the irregularities of the convent, she won over to her favor Msgr. Leonard Karpf, the pastor who was their spiritual director and the right hand of the bishop. So totally was this done that he declared to Mother Frances that he would denounce her to the

bishop if she tried to remove Sister Scholastica from Vienna. At this point Mother Frances wrote to Father Joch on January 27, 1895, "Scarcely has our Spiritual Father been restored to us, and Your Reverence, our Father for America, is once again faithful and firm, realizing that God's work is rooted in crosses, now Austria makes its thorns felt." On January 30, she wrote to him again, pleading for his assistance in this difficult situation:

In deepest woe I confidently have recourse to you, hoping that you will lend a helping hand, if it appears to you as a sacred duty to do so.

Our Sister M. Scholastica is again showing herself as a very imperfect religious. In this she is supported by Msgr. Karpf, dean and pastor in Simmering, Vienna XI, in such a manner that he warned me in writing, if I dared another time to try to remove this Sister from Vienna he would deal harshly with me. This priest is the right hand of His Lordship, the auxiliary bishop. He knows this and Sister M. Scholastica knows it too.

One of our Sisters remarked to Monsignor Karpf that Sister M. Scholastica was recalled to Rome from America in punishment. He called M. Scholastica and said: "If I knew that this is the truth, you would have to leave Vienna immediately." M. Scholastica assured me that she had completely satisfied him. She justified herself brilliantly.

If you, Reverend Father, would write to Monsignor Karpf, without mentioning me to him, nor to our Reverend Father because he is so fearful, and warn Monsignor in regard to this Sister, referring to the opinion of the priests who learned to know of her perversity, you would bestow a great favor on our Order. I know that Father Scholter had to be prevailed upon to forego reporting Sister M. Scholastica to the bishop. Since October we have been imploring God to enlighten us on how to save this poor Sister, and as to whether I am not going against His holy Will when I ask you, Reverend Father, to intervene in this important matter. I do not want to challenge you, but I beg you to assist us if you believe this suggestion or any other method would serve the purpose in accordance with your sense of duty. Sister M. Seraphina could give you much enlightenment about this Sister. . . .

We do not know whether or not Father Joch wrote to Msgr. Karpf concerning this matter, but when an occasion arose for the latter to correspond with Mother Frances, he asked her not to be offended at the recent stern communication concerning the superior of the local convent which he had sent to her; but if she was worried or concerned about anything or wanted to regulate any affairs of the convent, he would be most cooperative if she would inform him of it first, so that he would know the issues and how to act, as he was a conscientious and zealous priest. This he also communicated to the Sisters, especially to the superior, Sister Scholastica.

Mother Frances wrote him a very grateful letter, with the promise of previously seeking information or his approval for any orders which she would be giving to the local convent. With this agreement, Sister Scholastica was pinned to the wall and her disguise uncovered.

Mother Frances proceeded to the restoration of order in the little convent at Simmering. Sister Dolorosa, with whom Sister Scholastica had formed a purely sensual and childish friendship, and to whom so many improprieties were permitted, to the scandal of the other Sisters and externs, was ordered, with the consent of Msgr. Karpf, to return at once to the motherhouse in Rome. Sister Dolorosa refused to obey, and the superior, despite all her good qualities, knowing that her deceptions were discovered, formulated the plan of leaving the convent, together with those in her favor. She correctly surmised that she would either be obliged to obey the superior general or be deposed from her office as superior.

Two young Sisters, Martha Herbst and Dolorosa Koestelbacher, declared that they had made their vows unwillingly, which statement was verified by the remaining Sisters and by the laity. Three others joined the group, and on the evening of February 9, 1895, while the remaining Sisters were at night prayer in the chapel, they dressed in secular attire and with Sister Scholastica left the convent secretly, in a "closed coach" as affirmed by Mrs. Chau-

doir, a pious, distinguished lady who had been a witness of the affair.<sup>29</sup>

The group went to Munich, to Frau Teresia Koestelbacher, Zweigasse 6/3 Rechts. A few days after this event, a letter arrived at the home of the youngest of the group, with a request for a bed and other needed things. As she had signed her baptismal, not her religious name, this aroused suspicion in the home of her parents. Her sister thereupon took the letter to the pastor of the village and asked him to investigate. By tracing the place of residence according to the return address on the envelope, her sister was able to locate the street and number when she went to Munich, arriving there on a Sunday morning. After a long search in a somewhat large apartment house, she met the janitor, who told her that in a large attic room on the top floor a group of girls were rooming, who had arrived some days before. Going to the top floor and then to the attic, she heard noise and talking inside. She rapped. Someone came to the door, opening it just far enough to see who was there. Seeing who she was, those inside started to close the door on her, but she pushed them aside and entered. "I won't go with her," her younger sister screamed. "She will take me along and scold me!" Desperately she clung to Sister Scholastica but eventually she had to return with her sister. As soon as they were at home, the pastor of the parish began negotiating with the motherhouse for her return. This was another matter and not easy to effect, as the Cardinal Vicar had forbidden any of the fugitives to return.

This was the first information that Mother Frances received of the whereabouts of the fugitives. She was all but crushed by the heavy blow. "If an enemy had reviled me, I could have borne it; . . . But you, my other self, my companion and my bosom friend! You, whose companionship I enjoyed; at whose side I walked in procession in the house of God!" (Psalm 55:14-15)

As soon as Msgr. Karpf became aware of their destination, he sent an urgent letter to the delinquents, trying to make them aware of the gravity of their offense and persuading them to return to their motherhouse in a true penitential spirit. Three Sisters — Do-



lorosa, Scholastica, and Constantia — addressed themselves to their spiritual director, Msgr. Karpf, expressing their sorrow and stating their petition to return. Msgr. Karpf sent the letters to Rome, but the answer returned: "Cardinal Vicar forbade readmission." Signed, Mary Frances.<sup>30</sup>

Sister Scholastica gave as the reason of her defection the antipathy of the superior general toward her. This, however, was only an alibi, and many years later, when she did return as a prodigal, she stated her reasons as being her wounded pride and the consequent illusion that the superior general was no longer favorably inclined toward her. She also blamed Sister Stilla, the local assistant, who, she claimed, had been hateful and uncharitable toward her. But Sister Scholastica had long ceased to "walk in love with Christ" and was no longer the mistress of her heart. That she had secretly accepted 200 gulden as a name day gift from a lady in Vienna and was guilty of other misdeeds meant nothing to her anymore. She was dispensed from her vows, and only after eleven years of bitter suffering did she realize the gift of God she had lost and sorrowfully sought to regain it. Four of the other Sisters were also dispensed from their vows.

Mother Frances hastened to Vienna, taking with her another doubtful character, though not fully aware of it at the time — Sister Valeria. She had been the novice mistress in a Benedictine convent which had been suppressed by the Holy See because of the great abuses reigning there. When it was suppressed, Sister Valeria begged Mother Frances for permission to join the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. She was endowed with excellent qualities of mind and body, and made a very good impression on everyone, as her speech revealed much prudence and capability in directing others. For this reason Mother Frances consulted her on many things, and even appointed her mistress of novices soon after her profession. It was not long before Mother Frances recognized that she was instilling Benedictine, not Franciscan principles, into the novices and could not continue in this office. Hence, when in spite of her ill health and suffering she went to

Vienna with six Sisters on February 20, she took with her Sister Valeria to be installed as superior.

While in Vienna, Mother Frances tried to raise the spirit of the remaining Sisters who had suffered under the depressing and humiliating affair of February 9, and again tried to restore order and discipline in the house. The Sisters who had not left with the others had been led into many erroneous ways by their former superior, and needed great kindness and firmness to make them realize again the meaning of their religious vows and the practice and observance of them. The new Sisters had to take over the vacancies left by their companions.

Msgr. Karpf also suffered, as he said, "great anguish of soul." In his report to the bishop he wrote on March 13, 1895:

Great was the anguish of soul endured by the undersigned since February 10. Sleepless nights and painful hours were the consequences of this scandal for him. Countless were the letters and inquiries from great and lowly, and all wanted explanation, information, reassurance, etc., from Dean Karpf. Most of this had to be done in writing, and yet always in such a way that truth, charity, and Holy Church in her institutions would not be injured or wronged. Since the many other professional duties left little time during the day, the night hours had to be utilized to prolong the day. Something else, which I find difficult to write, must be disclosed. My heartache over this unhappy proceeding of the six Sisters was so great that I did not wish to hastily plunge our two Most Reverend Bishops, His Eminence and His Excellency, into the same distress of soul.

May the Most Reverend Prince-Archiepiscopate be graciously pleased to accept this report and consequently pass a milder judgment of the respectfully undersigned.

*Leonard Karpf*

*Prince-archiepiscopal spiritual director,  
dean and pastor.*

On March 21, the Sister who was literally "dragged" from that attic apartment by her sister and taken home, returned together with her sister to the convent in Vienna. When Mother Frances was called, there was a most sincere and touching welcome and

greeting. So happy was she at the return of this young Sister that she almost fell to her knees in gratitude to God. The Sister, being very young and immature, was pardoned her offenses after due negotiations with the Cardinal Vicar and given back her religious garb. Her sister also became a candidate, and both lived long and edifying lives in the community.

But news does travel! Sister M. Melania Eberth, one-time superior general, who was still in her parental home at the time when the Munich episode occurred, stated the fact that this matter was talked about in the *Wirtshaus* (tavern).

Before leaving Vienna on April 19, 1895, Mother Frances established a mission in Kukus, Bohemia, in the Diocese of Königgrätz. Because of a destructive fire, the mission was given up two years later and the Sisters returned to Vienna.

Upon her return to Rome from Bohemia in 1895, Mother Frances wrote to Father Joch on May 5, telling him that Msgr. Jacquemin and Sister Johanna would be coming to America with thirteen Sisters, and that she herself would be coming in September, if possible, with fourteen additional Sisters; for all these she begged a special blessing and fervent prayers. In a later letter she enclosed a check of \$600, the last money available from the motherhouse for the new mission which Father Joch had founded in Denville, New Jersey.



“IN VERY TRUTH I TELL YOU, A GRAIN  
OF WHEAT REMAINS A SOLITARY GRAIN  
UNLESS IT FALLS INTO THE GROUND  
AND DIES; BUT IF IT DIES, IT BEARS  
A RICH HARVEST” (John 12:24)

“... *an offering and a  
sacrifice to God*” (Eph 5:2).

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Curious onlookers gazed from behind half-drawn shades and curtains to see who the dark-clad figures were laden with bundles and packages, trudging along the road from the Denville depot to a place outside the town, under the oppressive humidity of a warm May day. It was not long before their curiosity was satisfied, for Joseph Schaefer of Barclay Street, New York, dealer in Kneipp supplies, had widely advertised in the Catholic papers the news of the introduction of the Kneipp Water Cure at Denville, New Jersey, and soon the word spread around that these odd figures were the people who would run the establishment and administer the Kneipp treatments!

After Father Joch had introduced the Kneipp Cure in the Marshfield hospital, the news of this event spread rapidly around the country, and he was asked to go to St. Agnes Convent, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, to administer the treatments to Father Francis Haas, O.F.M.Cap., who with Father Bonaventure Frey had been instrumental in establishing the Capuchin Order in this country. During one of those visits in March of 1895, Father Joch met Father Bonaventure, the provincial of the Order. In the course of their conversation, Father Bonaventure mentioned the fact that he and Abbot Hilary Pfraengle of St. Mary's Abbey, Newark, New Jersey, were accustomed to go to a certain place in New Jersey called Denville, for a few days of rest and recuperation. He playfully made a brief haphazard sketch of the place on a sheet

The Benedictines were happy to see the place transformed and improving week after week.

The introduction of the Kneipp Water Cure in Denville, which had been widely advertised in Catholic papers, attracted patients who were clamoring for admittance even before the house was ready to accept them. No matter what inconveniences they were subjected to, people were eager to be received and treated in their desire to regain their health. Most of the early patients were out-patients who did not remain over night.

Having learned the procedures and methods of the Water Cure in Bavaria from Father Kneipp himself, Father Joch took the place of the doctor in examining, prescribing, sometimes even treating male patients himself during the early years. The Sisters treated the women patients, Sister M. Wendelina Bauer particularly, by her cheerful disposition and winning smile doing more to alleviate suffering than any prescription.

In order to show that this was truly a charitable institution, people of all faiths and categories were admitted as patients. They came again and again and were grateful for everything. Within three months St. Francis Sanitarium was a well-run institution and plans were made for the construction of a new building.

As Denville was predominantly a Protestant community, there was great religious prejudice, due to ignorance, in the beginning of the foundation, and the Sisters were often subjected to abusive language and threatened with violent gestures on the part of people who did not understand their mission. But the Sisters' unflinching charity and kindness to all and their acts of continual charity soon brought about a reversal of opinion and they began to enjoy the esteem and the courtesy of the people in Denville and its far-flung environs.

On August 7, 1895, Mother Frances again set sail for America, together with a group of 21, including two Sisters, eleven novices, and eight postulants. It was with great difficulty that she obtained sufficient money for their trip, because she had given Father Joch the last \$600 from community funds. At the last minute, however,

through the intercession of St. Joseph, the deficit was supplied from the estate of a deceased Sister. This time Mother Frances' Aunt Rosa accompanied them, offering her assistance to the Sisters in Denville; but as she was in her sixty-sixth year, she was not able to do much and so returned home the following year. Sister Seraphina's brother, John Eberth, also came on this trip and offered his services, which continued until his death in 1918.

The trip was very hard on Mother Frances, who was not well, but the beautiful reception she received in Denville, where the Sisters had decorated everything with green garlands and flowers, cheered her and gave her new life. Sister Cyrilla Chmelaz recounts how Mother Frances told all the young Sisters to go out into the orchard and eat all the apples they wanted, because in Marshfield there was as yet no orchard. Everyone marveled at the incredible task which had been accomplished in Denville in little more than three months.

Some of the postulants and novices who had come with Mother Frances on this trip in August, 1895, soon left for Marshfield. Mother Frances left with the others later, arriving in Marshfield on September 6.<sup>4</sup> On the 15th, fifteen postulants received the habit, while some Sisters renewed their vows or pronounced them for life. Two days later the name day of Mother Frances was celebrated, and on the following third Sunday in September, as customary in the community, the feast of the Sorrowful Mother. Small wonder, then, when one of the newcomers remarked, "Oh, how nice it is in America — one feast day after another."

Besides the large group which had come with Mother Frances, another group of nine Sisters and four postulants had come over in June with Msgr. Jacquemin and Sister Johanna. All this necessitated many changes in the assignments of Sisters. We can well imagine what a task it was to fill the vacancies left by the seven Sisters who had gone to Denville and who already had some experience in hospital procedures and nursing care.

There were some but not many American postulants entering the novitiate in Marshfield, as the community had been established

in the United States only a little more than five years before, and communications were slow at the time. Some of the early staunch and persevering vocations from Kansas, however, were the five Betzen and the two Springob girls.

Soon after the arrival of Mother Frances in Wisconsin a conflict arose over Sister Cornelia Springob, who was stationed at St. Mary's Hospital, Oshkosh, and was urgently requested by Doctors Oviatt and Corbett to be left there, even though she had been promised to Father Joch in Denville. Sister Cornelia was a capable, intelligent, and responsible Sister, coming from a good Catholic family, and, being an American, had good command of the English language as well as a knowledge of American ways and conditions. In order to oblige Father Joch, who urgently demanded her in Denville, Mother Frances had asked Sister Cornelia to go there. A telegram was then sent to Father Joch, saying that Sister Cornelia would leave the next Tuesday and arrive in New York at 7 a.m. on September 20. Confident that she was already on her way there, Mother Frances, when called to Oshkosh, was amazed to find Sister Cornelia still at the hospital. Sister Boniface, the superior, explained that the two doctors had insisted on keeping her in Oshkosh as she was familiar with the language. Mother Frances tried by every means to appease Father Joch and offered to send any other Sister he might suggest, but he insisted on having Sister Cornelia, saying that he would leave if she would not be in Denville within fourteen days. Again Mother Frances sought to grant his request and wrote to Sister Boniface to send Sister Cornelia *if possible*. Immediately after this, there came a telegram from Sister Johanna, the vicaress, in Denville, saying, "Do not send Sister Cornelia here." Nothing more could be done except to keep Sister Cornelia in Oshkosh and discharge the nurse who had been hired to take her place.<sup>5</sup>

This incident gives us a glimpse into Father Joch's character and temperament. Although most loyal to the community and invaluable as an acting administrator, without whom the American houses would never have flourished or even continued to



exist, when his ire was stirred, he found it very difficult to accept other people's plans and to set the thermostat on his fiery temper.

We do not know how Father Joch accepted the final decision, but subsequent events might have been the result of his frame of mind.

Mother Frances helped the Sisters in whatever capacity she could, by providing opportunities for retreat, education, and inspiration for their apostolic work. Msgr. Jacquemin also assisted by giving retreats, at the close of which some of the Sisters pronounced their vows. On October 8, both went to Tomahawk. It was Mother Frances' first visit to Sacred Heart Hospital. Toward the middle of October she went to St. Mary's Hospital in Rhinelander. Msgr. Jacquemin had already been there to bless the hospital during the month of July, but he came again and gave the Sisters' retreat, as he had done in Tomahawk. Mother Frances had been urged to go to Rhinelander to regain her health, and it was from there that she wrote to Father Joch, "I shall stay in the New World in order to work as much as my strength allows."<sup>6</sup>

After this, she and Msgr. Jacquemin traveled to Oshkosh, to the new St. Mary's Hospital, which had been opened in the summer of 1895. Dr. Oviatt was extremely happy to see Mother Frances; he well remembered that first coming of the Sisters to the old building where they had to live in poverty and extreme need. After Oshkosh, the next stop was Menomonie, from where Msgr. Jacquemin went to Council Bluffs, Iowa, to visit relatives. Toward the end of November he and Mother Frances were in Wichita and were greeted there with great delight by Bishop Hennessy, who expressed his thanks that St. Francis Hospital had not been given up during the time of great crisis, due to the efforts of Father Joch.

In Wichita, after a retreat given again by Msgr. Jacquemin, there was profession of vows, some Sisters renewing them and others making their final commitment on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. In Aleppo, there was first and final profession on December 13.

In Denville there were other Sisters waiting to make retreat and pronounce their vows, and so before Christmas, Mother Frances and Msgr. Jacquemin journeyed there. "Christmas, 1895, was a big day in Denville," said Sister Euphemia Sachs years later. "Rev. Mother Frances, Father Jacquemin, Father Joch, and Sister M. Johanna were there." Profession day, December 29, was also a very happy day. But it soon became evident to the Sisters that their superiors were preoccupied with some problem. Before Msgr. Jacquemin left for Rome on January 5, 1896, he urged the Sisters to pray fervently because of a "great difficulty." Likewise, Mother Frances called upon the young Sisters to pray, saying, "Pray all you can."<sup>7</sup>

What the difficulty was is uncertain, but it may have been, partially at least, the question of whether or not to expand the facilities in Denville. It is certain that a decision to do so was made early in January, 1896, for on the 11th, a contract was signed to erect a frame building at St. Francis Sanitarium for the sum of \$6,950. Mother Mary Frances signed as president of the corporation. The Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

Another difficulty which may have presented itself at the time of Mother Frances' second visit in Denville was an incident involving Father Joch. Before becoming a priest he had studied medicine, and his knowledge of it he was able to put to use at times with the Kneipp patients. When the doctor happened to be absent, he sometimes examined the patient's heart, in the presence of a third person and according to Kneipp treatment. It seems that on one such occasion, when Mother Frances had consulted him about a Sister who was suffering from a physical ailment, Father Joch proceeded with a clinical examination of the Sister's heart, presumably in the presence of Mother Frances herself. In her mind such a procedure was inappropriate for a priest. It was quite upsetting to her, and when she returned to Wisconsin in February, she took the Sister along with her.

On February 4, 1896, the good mother of Mother Frances became seriously ill with influenza. Because the worst was to be

feared owing to her age, the Sacrament of the Dying was administered to her on February 7. She received it fully conscious and resigned to God's holy will. The next morning, February 8, she breathed her last in the arms of her daughter Hedwig. The two sons, first lieutenants Adam and Herman, were informed of the illness by telegraph but could not be released immediately from their military duties. They came to Bamberg in time only to see their mother lying in the coffin.

Anyone can well imagine what sorrow this death caused Mother Frances in a far distant country, but as always she recognized and acquiesced in the divine will and offered her sufferings for the well-being of her community.

Meanwhile Rev. Anton Joehren, a former member of Father Jordan's Catholic Teaching Society and now a missionary in the State of Washington, had made an offer to the community of a girls' school there. Mother Frances asked Father Joch to go and inspect this property, to see if it would be feasible for her to accept it. We might wonder why the superiors gave him almost unlimited control over all fiscal and business matters. Father Joch himself expressed it tersely when he said, "Msgr. Jacquemin was a giant in spiritual matters but a dwarf in material things."<sup>8</sup> And so it fell to his lot to hold things together.

Father Joch made the long trip to the West coast sometime in February, it appears, for on February 28, Mother Frances wrote him that she had until then been expecting him in Marshfield. She was very grateful for his having endured all the difficulties on his trip to Washington. "I do hope Your Reverence will come to Oshkosh and finally return to Denville," she wrote. She herself was expecting to go to Oshkosh to confer with Sister Johanna before the latter left for Rome.

From Oshkosh, Mother Frances wrote to him again on Monday, March 2, expressing once more her hope that he would return to Denville "to make secure the project just begun," that is, the erection of the frame building. She planned to leave on Wednes-

day or Thursday, expecting to see him in Denville as soon as possible.

A letter from Father Joch in Spokane brought forth another communication from her on March 3. Again she thanked him for enduring difficulties in order to make Uniontown and Lewiston available for the Sisters, and once more she confidently hoped he would return soon to St. Francis Sanitarium. "The Most Reverend Bishop of Newark is awaiting your return," she informed him.

Nothing came of the schools in Washington and Idaho, and Father Joch returned to Denville. Sister Johanna also left for the East, departing on March 9 for Rome.<sup>9</sup>

When Mother Frances went to Denville soon after Sister Johanna's departure, Father Joch was there. So, too, was a heavy cross she was to bear for many days to come. As eager as she had been to meet Father Joch in Denville, just as eager was she to depart from him. The precise reason for her sudden leaving and boarding the next steamer for Europe is not certain, but it is evident that the relations between the two had become less favorable. Mother Frances, perhaps not realizing the distance between Denville and the West coast, thought Father Joch had spent too much on the trip. On his part, he was concerned about the confidence she had shown a priest in Marshfield, as though she would be willing to let him take his place in the community. Then, too, the quite recent incident in which Father Joch had acted in the role of physician was still in Mother Frances' thoughts.

Whatever may have prompted her to leave America about the middle of March, 1896, was no doubt in the plan of God. Mother Frances never returned to the New World. On April 2 she arrived with Sister Pia at the Sisters' convent in Vienna. It was Holy Thursday. Remaining there for the Sacred Triduum of Holy week, she left for Rome with Sister Valeria on Easter Monday, April 6.

Arrived at the motherhouse on the 8th, she heard with consternation that Father Joch was there and wished to see her. He had left New York on March 28, soon after her departure from

Denville. For what reason? Some witnesses have quoted him as saying he went to Rome to defend his priestly honor and to depose Mother Frances. He stated, however, that his intention was to help Mother Frances, and to this statement he firmly adhered in later years. Considering Father Joch's temperament, his sudden changes in mood, one might readily conclude that there was truth in both statements.

It was late in the evening when Mother Frances learned of his urgent request to see her, and she therefore informed him through Msgr. Jacquemin that she was not prepared to see him at that late hour but would see him in the morning.

Morning came but there was no meeting. During the night, Mother Frances spent several hours in prayer in the chapel, without even opening her suitcase. It was a night of intense suffering for her. The prospect of another encounter with Father Joch, after her recent one in Denville, weighed heavily upon her. For Sister Valeria, too, the meeting was a matter of concern, for she had written Father Joch an angry letter and was scheming against him. Urged on by her, therefore, Mother Frances changed her mind about the meeting and together they left the motherhouse early in the morning while the Sisters were in the chapel. No one knew of their departure except Sister Johanna. Distraught in mind, Mother Frances had gone to her already at three o'clock, telling her she wished to return to America with Sister Valeria to report against Father Joch to the Apostolic Delegate.<sup>10</sup> Sister Valeria then spoke up, saying: "We are leaving on a journey but are not saying where. A priest is helping us." Then she told Sister Johanna that under obedience she was not to say a word about it.

After leaving the motherhouse, the two stopped at the Church of S. Antonio in the Via Merulana in Rome, where for several hours Mother Frances prayed with intense fervor and confidence. She then went to Confession, remaining a long time in the tribunal of penance. At her invitation, Sister Valeria also went to Confession, and the confessor, so she tells us, advised her not to forsake the mother general.

The next stop was in Padua, where they visited the tomb of the great wonder worker, St. Anthony. Again Mother Frances pleaded with him to obtain light in this dark hour of trial, so that she would know what was God's will for her and for her community. From Padua the two continued their trip, arriving in Vienna three days after their departure from Rome.

It was Thursday, April 9, when they left the motherhouse, a day of bewilderment and concern for those they had left behind. The non-appearance of Mother Frances at breakfast caused Msgr. Jacquemin to inquire whether she was ill. When he learned from Sister Johanna the simple fact that she had left with Sister Valeria, with no indication of their destination, there began that series of events which was to culminate in acute suffering for Mother Frances. Sixteen years before, she had written to Father Jordan, "May the Lord be glorified and the creature annihilated. This is my maxim for the duration of my life." Soon, indeed, she was to experience that prayer put into effect, in a crucial test of walking in love with the Crucified One.

After the two priests at the motherhouse, Msgr. Jacquemin and Father Joch, were aware of the departure of Mother Frances and Sister Valeria on April 9, they hastily conferred with each other and then informed Franciscan Father Bernard Doebbing, president of the College of S. Isidor in Rome and extraordinary confessor of the Sisters, of the state of affairs. Father Doebbing in turn informed Cardinal Parocchi at the Vicariate. From there a telegram was sent to Vienna to ascertain the whereabouts of Mother Frances, but no enlightenment came in reply. She was not in Vienna and the Sisters did not know where she was.

In the mind of Msgr. Jacquemin there seemed to be only one course to follow, and he set about it without delay. On April 10, he drew up a list of complaints against Mother Frances, convinced that the only remedy would be to have her removed from office. Cardinal Parocchi received these complaints the following day, which was Saturday.

On Monday, the Cardinal sent a copy of the complaints, through

his secretary, to Father Doebbing and directed him to conduct a canonical visitation at the motherhouse, to question the Sisters about what had happened, about the alleged disorders, and ascertain from the Sisters their judgment regarding the measures to be adopted. The order was carried out the very same day, April 13, and Father Doebbing sent a three-page report in Italian to Cardinal Parocchi. Uncertain as to how he should proceed, the Cardinal consulted with His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII. As a result, Cardinal Parocchi issued a decree on April 14, removing Mother Frances from office and appointing Sister Johanna Ankenbrand as the new mother general. Father Doebbing was ordered to go once more to the Sisters and inform them of the decree. A letter of obedience was to be taken by Father Joch to Genoa, the supposed destination of Mother Frances and Sister Valeria, in which the two were asked to hand over their tickets to America or other destination, to the bearer of the letter. Apparently this last instruction was not carried out. The news of the appointment, however, caused utter dismay in the heart of Sister Johanna. Only after a retreat of three days was she able to assume her new duties with calmness and courage.

Notice was sent by telegram to each of the houses in Europe and America, including Vienna, where Mother Frances and Sister Valeria had meanwhile arrived. Sister Valeria, however, refused to accept the change imposed by the decree and failed to inform the Sisters in the house. Apparently, therefore, Mother Frances herself was in ignorance at that time as to what had transpired. After a short stay in Vienna she went to her sister Hedwig in Bamberg.

There is no evidence that Mother Frances ever saw or heard the complaints drawn up by Msgr. Jacquemin and by Father Doebbing after his interrogation of Father Joch and the Sisters at the motherhouse. Only in 1963 did they come to light in the archives of the Vicariate in Rome. In our perplexity we ask why all the complaints against Mother Frances were apparently accepted at face value by the Cardinal Vicar, without giving her an

opportunity to speak a word in her own defense. Why such haste on his part in issuing the decree of April 14? It is our opinion that, if given time, Mother Frances could have cleared herself of all the charges levelled against her, had she wished to do so. The situation had come to a painful climax wherein she was caught in a web from which she could not extricate herself.

First of all, the failing health of Mother Frances must be taken into consideration. At times she could scarcely stand upright and was troubled with a lapse of memory, so that she found it difficult to exercise the duties of her office as expected of her. She had never enjoyed robust health, and now when the duties of her office were steadily increasing, her strength and health were decreasing.

The community was developing rapidly in the New World and in the Old, with new establishments being made, one each year between 1889 and 1892, then four in 1893 and one in 1895. This meant much traveling for Mother Frances. It meant also frequent transferring of Sisters, especially when new recruits came to America from Rome. The young needed religious as well as academic and professional training, and this responsibility fell on the foundress. Dealing with characters that were not always ideal, a certain measure of disciplining was necessary. In the eyes of some, Mother Frances appeared to be too severe at times.

As we have seen, in the first years of expansion, Mother Frances relied strongly on Msgr. Jacquemin and Father Joch, so much so that gradually they came to exercise a degree of authority not intended, in the internal affairs of the community. In these affairs, some Sisters were of the opinion that Msgr. Jacquemin interfered too much, so that Mother Frances felt obliged to consult him on every issue. She herself had reservations about this, for she asked a young Sister once, much to the Sister's surprise, if it would not be better for the superior general to govern the community in internal affairs.

On the other hand, Msgr. Jacquemin felt a growing need for a change in the office of superior general, in view of Mother Fran-



ces' steadily declining health. One day he questioned Father Joch about this, to which question Father Joch rather angrily replied: "She is the foundress and should be given time and opportunity to regain her health." Years later, in 1938, he summed up the situation in this way: "Father Jacquemin and Mother Frances sanctified one another. He had a strong character. He possessed principles and in these he was firm as a rock. . . . When Mother Frances wished to change something which was contrary to principle, he did not allow it."<sup>11</sup>

With Father Joch himself, as explained, there were the difficulties arising from his temperament, his strong-mindedness, and from his involvement in the Kneipp Cure treatments in Denville.

More than all these, perhaps, was the subtle influence of Sister Valeria, the former Benedictine nun whom Mother Frances had accepted in 1893, and because of her outstanding qualities had appointed as novice mistress after her simple profession of vows, and in February, 1895, as superior in Vienna. In her great humility, Mother Frances characteristically placed confidence in Sister Valeria's judgment, considering her to be the more enlightened one. Little did she realize that this Sister was doing more harm than good in the community, that she herself was being duped by her intrigues.

In letters to America, Sister Valeria incited the Sisters to believe that the poor motherhouse in Rome, with no income of its own and no promising future since it had no apostolic activity, was merely a burdensome, useless house, depending on the more promising missions in America and becoming perhaps even a burden to the house in Vienna. She reasoned therefore that the motherhouse should be separated from the branch houses, that instead, the principal branch house should become the motherhouse. Mother Frances and she, or vice versa, should rule the houses.<sup>12</sup>

Some time earlier, before Msgr. Jacquemin was temporarily absent from the convent in 1894, she had proposed to Mother

Frances that the community did not need a spiritual director and that it would be best if it were governed by the superior alone.

Shortly before Mother Frances' arrival on April 2, Sister Valeria had sent to the Holy See a letter of complaint about Msgr. Leonard Karpf. To this priest the Sisters owed much gratitude for his services in the establishment of the Vienna house and for his intervention at the time of the defection of Sister Scholastica and companions. Through her letters to the houses in America, Sister Valeria had collected material for devising a similar scheme against Father Joch, and shortly after, she made the same maneuver against Msgr. Jacquemin.<sup>13</sup>

All of the above factors were now adding up to a climax in the life of Mother Frances, a climax that would determine her acceptance or rejection of an opportunity to glorify the Lord at the cost of her own abasement. She chose the way of the saints, "to walk in love as Christ also loved us and delivered Himself up for us, an offering and a pleasing sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2).

Some idea of Msgr. Jacquemin's motive is found in his opening statement concerning her deposition: "Lest he seem to be neglectful in office, the undersigned spiritual director of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother in Rome sets forth in confidence the following: M. Frances of the Cross, superior general, appears to have acted improperly during her last years in office." Noteworthy are the words "*appears to have acted improperly*," "*sets forth in confidence*," "*during her last years in office*." Some of the reasons for her deposition from office were the charges leveled against her in regard to a lack of edifying example and strange conduct, especially her disappearance from the motherhouse on April 9; sending Sisters, even singly, on unnecessary trans-Atlantic trips; unreasonable transfers of about thirty Sisters from one house to another during the period of about six months; undue severity toward several Sisters; an unwise decision involving two novices in regard to religious profession; and sending home two newly professed Sisters for reasons of health.

It was also cited that while in America, she twice stated that

she was going to Rome to be released from her office by the Cardinal Vicar, but the day after her return to Rome, she strongly expressed her desire to go to Assisi to enter the Order of St. Clare, and then left the convent with Sister Valeria without notice to the Sisters. "Truly," wrote Msgr. Jacquemin, "unless an efficacious remedy be applied to her perverse disturbances the greatest danger threatens: the entire congregation may suffer moral and material injury almost beyond repair."

Such were the reasons cited by the Monsignor. That he really believed there was imminent danger for the community is seen also in what he wrote to Father Joch on May 19: "It seems to me that in the end M. Valeria and Mother Frances will leave the community altogether." How right he was about Sister Valeria but how wrong about Mother Frances! A year later he wrote again to Father Joch, saying: "Ever since I have been with the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother I have had only one intention; namely, through instruction to help the convent gradually develop according to the prescriptions of canon law. I do not think I am to blame for the several accusations against me and the misunderstandings, as if I considered the Order as my own affair, for no thought was ever farther from my mind. I desire only to serve and save my soul; whether it be here or there is all the same." However wrong his interpretations of Mother Frances' actions may seem to us, we must concede that he submitted his complaints, not from malice but from a sense of duty.

Similar complaints are listed in the report by Father Doebling: Mother Frances' harsh treatment of several Sisters, failure to accept counsel and abide by the constitutions. Moreover, she incited the Sisters against the two directors, Jacquemin and Joch, maliciously intriguing against them and other priests, in Rome and America. She poses as a saint as if inspired in all by God, but her words and deeds reveal contradictions, confusion, shame, sudden illness and recovery. She desired to go to America to report Father Joch to the Apostolic Delegate, as she related to Sister Johanna the day she left Rome with Sister Valeria without notice.

The interrogation by Father Doebbing also revealed that the Sisters had had a great reverence and affection for Mother Frances for many years, and only recently, especially during the past year, had they noticed that she had been "acting strangely, that she was so nervous and disturbed as to be continually contradicting herself."

It is not certain how many professed Sisters Father Doebbing interrogated, but there were at least several. Father Joch was also questioned, as he stated in an interview with Sister Beda Hack in Denville, May 20, 1938: "Bishop Doebbing came to me and questioned me in regard to the matter. He was not yet bishop at that time." Already the day after his arrival, as he also explained, Father Joch was confined to bed and was seriously ill with typhus for several weeks. He left Rome on May 7, 1896. Both the Sisters and Father Joch were well recommended by Father Doebbing in his report to the Cardinal Vicar.

When it was learned at the motherhouse that Mother Frances was in Bamberg, a telegram was sent to her recalling her to Rome. She left immediately, arriving in the Eternal City late at night after the Sisters had retired.

Promptly she was informed by the portress of all that had transpired in her absence. Without delay she went to the bed of Mother Johanna, knelt down humbly, and in answer to the question, "Mother, why have you done this to us," she replied, completely resigned and contented: "Let us leave all this as it is. It is good so. God has permitted it."<sup>14</sup>

The new superior general, Mother Johanna, felt very keenly the hurt that had been inflicted upon Mother Frances and sought by all means to alleviate her sufferings. She felt that a change of residence from Rome was imperative for her health at this time. Therefore she asked Mother Frances if she would like to go to Vienna for a rest and thereafter spend a few weeks with her sister Hedwig in Bamberg.

Mother Frances gladly acquiesced in these plans and gratefully accepted the proffered free time to regain her health while spend-

ing some weeks with her sister in Bamberg, who felt very keenly the absence of their deceased mother. The sudden lifting of the burden of her position after years of activity left Mother Frances quite at a loss and in need of a period of adjustment.

Although her response in Rome to the news of her deposition was one of resignation and peaceful acceptance, we are told by Sister Stanisla, who was in Vienna at the time, that she took it very hard. She did not know what to do, and as Sister relates, Mother Frances said to her in the company of other Sisters: "Come with me. I should like to start over again." To this Sister Stanisla replied: "Mother, I'll stay in the community in which I entered until I die. And don't you go away either. Stay with us; you have founded the community." She consented immediately, and never again did she refer to this episode of her life.

Like the disciples of Emmaus, she did not at once fully comprehend all that the Lord was speaking to her on the way, that "Christ had to suffer all these things and so enter into his glory" (Luke 7:26). But upon reflection, and in the "breaking of the bread" in the Eucharist, she recognized the Lord in the present situation and in all the persons who had brought it about.

There is no evidence that Mother Frances ever spoke in her own defense in the months and years following her deposition. There was no resentment on her part for having been submitted to so speedy a deposition without a hearing. In the limited horizon of our understanding we ask, Why does God exact such painful sacrifices from his well-beloved ones, who have done their utmost to carry out His divine will in all their undertakings, even when misunderstood and misinterpreted? Only in the spirit of faith do we recognize that saints are not formed on the pedestal or on the altar, but in the scuffle of daily human encounter, with its trials and difficulties and misunderstandings, above which they rise to become "imitators of God as His most dear children, and walk in love as Christ also loved us."

Although there was peace in the soul of Mother Frances, and while for the most part the news of her deposition was accepted

by the Sisters as God's will for the community, there was resistance by some in Vienna and America. In Vienna, Sister Valeria steadfastly refused to accept the change of superiors and succeeded in influencing even the church authorities, to the extent that they considered making the Vienna house independent or giving it up entirely. Her telegram to America, "Vienna separates from Rome," spread confusion overseas. When commanded to come to Rome, Sister Valeria chose rather to leave the convent. She left Vienna on July 7, after the arrival of Mother Johanna on July 2, and later joined the Benedictine Order again, receiving the name of Donna Constantia.

During the time of these events in the Vienna house, Mother Frances remained calm and undisturbed. Sister Alphonsina Amschler, who had come there on May 3, related that after returning from an errand in the city, she noticed quite a confusion. The Sisters then told her that Mother Frances had come into the kitchen and, referring to Mother Johanna, said, "That's the Mother now." She also recalled that Mother Frances used to come into the kitchen and help her peel potatoes, during which time they said the rosary together.<sup>15</sup>

In America, resistance to the change occurred in Wisconsin, as we learn from several Sisters who were involved in or heard of the disturbance.<sup>16</sup> In Menomonie, as Sister Cyrilla Chmelaz relates, the Sisters felt terrible. "We were talking, crying, and consulting with one another, wondering what we were going to do about that. We weren't going to put up with it." It was unanimously decided to write to Msgr. Jacquemin to find out the reason why Mother Frances was deposed, but his reply did not fully satisfy them. Bishop Schwebach of La Crosse and Bishop Messmer of Green Bay, to whom Sisters Innocentia Amschler of Menomonie and Stephanie Geldner of Tomahawk had gone for advice, also wished to know the reasons for the removal of Mother Frances from office. Neither bishop had much to say about the whole situation.

Wholly sympathetic with Mother Frances, the Sisters wrote to

her individually, expressing their willingness to share every cross and trial with her. Then came the unsigned telegram from Vienna that Vienna was separating from Rome, and the Sisters did not know what to do. After much weeping and praying, they resolved to hold fast to their promise of loyalty to their foundress. How welcome then was the general letter which Mother Frances sent them, thanking them for their filial participation in her distress and giving them advice which remained impressed on Sister Cyrilla for the rest of her life: "Hold fast to Reverend Father [Jacquemin] and you will not be led astray."

Sister Dionysia Griebel tells what happened in Tomahawk in the spring of 1896. The superior, Sister Mechtildis Bauer, had received a letter ordering her to go to Rome, and during her absence Sister Stephanie took her place. Before long the superior from Menomonie, Sister Innocentia, arrived in Tomahawk with the woe-ful news that Mother Frances was no longer the Mother and the community would be dissolved. Tomahawk, Menomonie, and Oshkosh, she said, were going to separate from Mother Johanna and keep together, and they would try to have Rhinelander join the group.

To this plan Sister Dionysia was strongly opposed. Fearing the worst, she decided to go to Rhinelander. With no money for a ticket, she at once set about earning enough by selling some "nice fresh onions" to the butcher for fifty cents. In Rhinelander, she was soon calmed when Sister Bonaventure, the superior, a good, holy soul, told her, "That will never work. They cannot separate as easily as they think. I, for my part, will never separate from Rome. We are satisfied and will obey the Church. Now we have to pray much, so that everything will go well."

From Sister Clotildis Paul we learn how the news was received in Marshfield. Sister Mechtildis had gone there by train, and when she came to the hospital and saw the Sisters working in the field, she asked them, "Do you also want to be disloyal children?" She meant "disloyal to Mother Frances," to whom she herself was staunchly loyal, but none of the Sisters knew what she was talk-

ing about, for they had not yet heard the news and did not know what was going on. The oldest in the group, Sister Evangelista, spoke up and answered, "All of us want to do what Holy Church desires."

Sister Mechtildis was considered the main cause of the reaction in Wisconsin by Msgr. Jacquemin, who wrote to Father Joch on June 22, 1896, "The entire perversity of the Sisters in Wisconsin (with the exception of Marshfield) came from M. Mechtildis and from M. Boniface [in Oshkosh] who thought she had to imitate her wayward relative. A meeting of the Sisters took place to formulate the insubordinate message to be sent by telegram, but this was not done to agitate against Your Reverence alone. It is all reducible then to about three Sisters; the others were simply led into error."

Shortly after, on July 5, he wrote again to Father Joch:

Now the critical moment has come when one must do everything possible to support the community. To this we two should also contribute. The internal government and formation must remain entirely in the hands of Reverend Mother and the Sisters themselves. But the *regimen externum* [external government] cannot be handled by the Sisters alone. There they need help, and that for all the places where the Order exists. That was the thought which I wanted to communicate to you in Rome. I am sorry that I did not do so calmly as I should have, and for this I beg your pardon. I have no other interest in working for the Sisters than you have, and you have none other than I. We can, however, accomplish something only if we work hand in hand in the help which we should render in the external administration of the community. . . .

Both priests contributed to the spiritual and material welfare of the community in the years that followed, Father Joch more so with the material, and Msgr. Jacquemin most of all with the spiritual and canonical development of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. With Mother Johanna, and Mother Frances in her retirement, they continued to build up what Cardinal Parocchi had approved as a religious institute, and about



whom the Monsignor wrote to Sister Pia, January 17, two days after the death of the Cardinal in 1903: "Next to God, the Sisters have the Cardinal to thank that they were acknowledged as a religious community and that they came through all the difficulties that threatened the young community in the beginning."<sup>17</sup>

Soon after the deposition of Mother Frances, Mother Johanna wrote a letter to all the Sisters telling them of the painful blow this event had caused her, and asking them to cooperate with her in all things, as she had no other thought in mind but the salvation of their souls and the well-being of the community. She reminded them of, and asked them to meditate on, the sorrows which Mary, the Sorrowful Mother, experienced when her divine Son was taken from her and the beloved disciple given to her instead. She asked in all humility for the Sister's prayers and support. Bravely putting their hands to the plough and their trust in God, even as they do to this day, the Sisters united in prayer and activity as the spiritual daughters of Mother Frances, their foundress.



# CHAPTER 8

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## **In Retirement — Holy Death**



“LET MY PRAYER COME BEFORE YOU LIKE  
INCENSE, THE RAISING OF MY HANDS  
LIKE AN EVENING OFFERING” (Psalm 141:2)

“ . . . to ascend in  
pleasing fragrance” (Eph 5:2).

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When Mother Frances went to visit her sister Hedwig in Bamberg, as Mother Johanna had suggested, she and Hedwig visited the graves of their dear departed parents, and Mother Frances was touched upon seeing how beautifully the grave of her mother, particularly, had been decorated. After some time she returned to Vienna and took part in a retreat as far as her health permitted, edifying all by her example of humility and submission to authority.

Mother Johanna returned from Vienna to Rome on October 15, 1896, bringing with her Mother Frances, who remained there for the following nine years. Looking at it from a human standpoint, it certainly was no easy matter for Mother Frances, who had founded the community, determined its course according to Franciscan ideals, and instilled the Franciscan spirit into the members, to submit now to the will and guidance of another. Yet throughout her whole life she had sought not her own, but the holy will of God; so now also she humbly bowed to God's holy will in all that He permitted to befall her. Father Joch sketched, in a few bold strokes, the mission which Mother Frances had to accomplish:

Mother Frances had founded the Community; she had planted the “passion flower.” She had impressed her ideals on the Congregation and communicated to it her spirit, and this spirit still animates it. It is the best and most beautiful inheritance from Mother Frances. She worked and suffered much, very much, for the Community. Her greatest contribution was made after her retirement in her silent cell. There she appears to us in her full spiritual greatness. There for

fifteen years she fasted, prayed, preached by her example, and so implored God's blessing upon her work, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.<sup>1</sup>

In her diary she wrote on November 21, 1896: "Now I have sacrificed *all*, my whole being, in and with Mary, to the Most High."

In December she again made a retreat, at the end of which she made the following resolution:

To take root in Mary Immaculate and to be formed in her according to the designs of God; to be introduced by her into the mystery of love and suffering that I may become in truth a bride of the Crucified, one who will never abandon His blood-stained feet until Love Crucified shall say: "Come up higher; take your place in the center of My Heart." Mary must initiate me into the mystery of our altars and adorn my soul with a bridal and eucharistic love, that I may deserve ever more to partake worthily of the Bread of angels and the Wine which brings forth virgins. I humbly pray God to instill in me deep contempt of self, together with purity and denial of self-will, as another special fruit of the retreat.<sup>2</sup>

Not infrequently Mother Frances told her superior general how happy she was to be able to offer herself daily before the Tabernacle for the prosperity and growth of the community. With extreme longing she desired to be with our Eucharistic Lord as often as possible. She knelt before Him many hours at a stretch in deepest recollection, leading others to true devotion by her admirable example. According to a reliable witness, she spent about ten hours in adoration in the chapel on the first Sunday in March, 1897, a day devoted by the Sisters to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Only in the next world will it be known how many hours of the night she spent in adoration of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Her heart, burning with love, did not count the hours of her conversation with her Eucharistic Spouse.

Nothing of importance is related of Mother Frances during those years of quiet retirement in the motherhouse.

The little room assigned to her was directly opposite the chapel, and this pleased her very much. At first she could participate only in the liturgy and prayers in common. She spent most of her time in her room, rarely leaving it except for chapel and recreation. There she ate her frugal meals, did some light needlework, read spiritual books, and prayed. Most valuable was her counsel to the new superior general.

After her health improved, she went to St. Peter's Basilica almost daily, to pray at her favorite places, near the Pieta, in the Blessed Sacrament chapel, and before the altar of St. Peter. During Lent she tried to visit the seven principal churches of Rome. In her private devotions Mother Frances closely followed the cycle of the liturgical year, as her letters to Hedwig reveal.

In the year 1897, the stations of the Way of the Cross were erected in the chapel of the motherhouse, and to her great consolation and joy she was able to pray the Way of the Cross daily. Sisters who saw her have affirmed that she prayed it with the most profound devotion and love. "The Cross is the key to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in which are kept all the treasures and riches of the Eternal Father." Thus she wrote to Hedwig, desiring her also to practice devotion to the Way of the Cross. Her letters to her sister clearly show how much strength she drew from the contemplation of the sufferings of Christ.

As soon as her health permitted, she offered her assistance wherever help was needed, making herself the least among all the Sisters and edifying all by her example. In a practical way, too, she gave assistance in teaching the younger Sisters to play the organ.

In the course of the year 1898, the brother of the deceased Sister Elia, John Henneman, a very good, capable carpenter, who had already worked for the Sisters in Rome and in America, again offered his services to the motherhouse. The first tabernacle for the chapel, the frames for the stations of the Way of the Cross, and other beautiful objects were made by him.

During that year, while he was working in the motherhouse,

Mother Frances bore a silent wish in her heart. She occupied, as before, her room near the chapel, where she could so truly satisfy the urge of her heart and spend several hours daily in the chapel in fervent prayer for the community. However, in her great love for holy poverty, this room with two windows she considered too large for her use alone, and therefore, as she later disclosed, she said to St. Joseph with all childlike candor: "Good holy Father Joseph, you were a carpenter. Secure for me a very small cell with one window, just large enough that I can move about in it."

A few days later, Msgr. Jacquemin respectfully asked her if it would offend her to have half of her room partitioned off for a a confessional room, because a strict regulation had been issued by the Holy See in regard to confessionals in the convents of women religious. By erecting a confessional completely separated from the chapel, the requirement could be met. Mother Frances then related to him the petition she had placed before St. Joseph and which he had granted so promptly. Mr. Hennemann then made the confessional and, out of half of Mother Frances' room, the confessional room.<sup>3</sup>

When Father Doebbing, the former extraordinary confessor of the Sisters in the motherhouse, who had been called for consultation by Msgr. Jacquemin and Father Joch during the sudden disappearance of Mother Frances in April, 1896, became Bishop of Nepi and Sutri, he saw the necessity of a child-care institution in his diocese in the town of Castel San Elia, about thirty miles north of Rome. It was a community of about 1,000 people, situated in a locality where mothers had to leave their children in the care of unsuitable persons while helping in the fields in order to produce meager crops from the unproductive soil.

Since the bishop knew the Sisters well, in 1901 he offered the motherhouse a gift of an old roomy house, called Castel, together with the field belonging to it, on condition that they would conduct a day care center and a small hospital for the people of the place. Since the superior general was in America at the time, and



there were not enough Sisters for the opening of a new mission, the request could not be granted immediately; but in 1904, in answer to the bishop's repeated requests, preparations were made for the opening of the mission. Mother Frances went with Mother Johanna to inspect the place. Both saw the distressing circumstances of the people, as well as the Sanctuary of the *Madonna ad Rupes* in the deep, narrow valley, and concluded that this would be an ideal place in which to practice the active as well as the contemplative religious life. The large house needed extensive remodeling, which incurred heavy expenses. For this, Msgr. Jacquemin donated 4,100 lire. On May 25, 1905, three Sisters moved into the new mission, with Sister Bernarda Huempfner as the superior.

Many articles of furniture had been purchased in Rome and brought to Castel San Elia by oxcart. Even the motherhouse had to part with some of its valuables, such as the reed organ, which Mother Frances wrapped in carpets of her own making for transportation. She seemed to have come back to life; her health had long since improved, so that she could participate in everything, much to her joy and happiness. Soon after the opening of the mission, she went to Castel San Elia to stay.

Mother Johanna would gladly have appointed her the local superior, but Mother Frances begged her not to do so, just as she had also besought her when the general chapter wished to re-elect her as superior general in 1902. She felt she could do more by prayer and common work for the community than by all the activity and distraction to which she had been subjected during her office as superior.

Already in Carmel, Mother Frances had accepted Elias as her patron, and now she was overjoyed that she could work here, in this solitude near the basilica dedicated to him.

Having offered her services for the care of the children in this mission, she had a perfect opportunity to unite the active with the contemplative life. She assisted at all the religious exercises in the chapel, but if there was no Mass there, she went to the

parish church, and after Mass, down the steep steps to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Cliffs, *Madonna ad Rupes*, where she prayed for many hours, as long as time permitted. She hurried home then to her task of tending and supervising the children. She was the visible guardian angel of her little charges. She took care of and watched over them with motherly love, washed and cleaned those who came in a woeful state of neglect. With zeal, she taught the little ones the simple elements of the faith, such as the Sign of the Cross and little prayers suited to their mental capacity. To some of the older girls she taught French and German.

During the afternoon rest period of the hot Italian summer, Mother Frances wished to relieve the other Sisters of their duty of supervision, so that they also could enjoy a short rest. For herself, she desired nothing more than to be "an offering and a pleasing sacrifice to God." When the children were dismissed to their homes in the evening, she would rap at the kitchen door and inquire whether or not there was work to be done, such as peeling potatoes or cleaning vegetables, which tasks she performed with unaffected simplicity and helpfulness.

Her whole manner of acting reflected her love of God and of neighbor. Very often she would go out to visit the sick to bring them comfort and consolation; and the poor, to see if she could help them in any way, bringing them bread and other food. She was content to wear old and mended clothing for herself, and she mended the clothes of her charges if their mothers were unable to do so.

She loved the liturgy of the Church and all that was connected with it; from the very beginning of the community in Rome she had insisted on cleanliness and decorum in the chapel and its surroundings. However poor the Sisters were, she tried to obtain worthy, suitable articles needed for divine service. In Castel San Elia she personally helped to beautify the chapel for feast days and then spent most of the day in the chapel in prayer.

Most predominantly evident was her constant and uninterrupted

communing with God — her prayer, which rose to the throne of God “like fragrant incense.” She allowed herself only a few hours of rest during the night, rising early in order to commune with God. Her whole being was sustained by grace, so that she could say with St. Paul, “I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

About a year after Mother Frances had been peacefully settled in Castel San Elia, she had an unexpected visitor one day. It must have gladdened her heart no less than that of the father in the parable of the prodigal son, when Sister Scholastica, contrite and humbled after eleven years of regret and domestic service and now readmitted to the community, came to visit her there. She had not wished to go to see Mother Frances, for she did not want to reopen old wounds, but the Sisters at the motherhouse persuaded her to do so. With great kindness Mother Frances received her, and so it was with a light heart that Sister returned to the motherhouse, saying, “Mother Frances was really glad to see me!” On being readmitted in 1906, she had been permitted to be known again by her former name, Sister Scholastica. Like the prodigal son, she had learned her lesson through bitter experience. In a letter of May 20, 1908, to Msgr. Jacquemin, she wrote, “How quickly one is out, and how long it takes to better oneself and advance in good. What a bitter struggle it costs body and soul.” She acknowledged the weight of guilt which oppressed her soul because of her accusations against him, made, as she said, because he gave her no higher office. She wished to retract any and all of those accusations, which she feared might still be on file in the archives of the Vicariate and would later come to light again. Thereafter, she lived an exemplary life in the community until her death in Vienna in 1937.

In 1910, in order to commemorate Msgr. Jacquemin’s twenty-five years of service to the community, the Sisters at the motherhouse in Rome had prepared a little celebration for October 14. Mother Johanna wished Mother Frances also to come from Castel San Elia and participate in the festivities of this occasion, and

Mother Frances did so joyfully, to show her reverence and gratitude toward Msgr. Jacquemin, who for so many years had been her close collaborator, and to whom the community owed so much. When the Sisters gathered together to thank Msgr. Jacquemin and offer him best wishes, he presented Mother Frances as foundress to the Sisters, since many of the young people had never seen her. Greatly surprised at this, she tried to hide in her embarrassment by slipping behind a few Sisters near her. Writing to her sister Hedwig and relating the incident, she expressed her feelings of the transitoriness of life when she said, "Our life is alternately work and fatigue, joy and sorrow, but through it all shines the adorable will of God."<sup>4</sup>

After a few days she returned to Castel San Elia with her superior, Sister Bernarda. Toward the end of November she asked to make a retreat of ten days. During this retreat she asked for two special graces; namely, a long and painful death agony in order to be ready to enter eternity wholly purified, and a participation in Christ's crowning with thorns. What mortal can emulate the heroism of this God-loving soul, who desired nothing in this life but to be one with Christ, who "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave and being made like unto men, and appearing in the form of man he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8).

Soon after this retreat, on Candlemas Day, February 2, 1911, Mother Frances fainted in the chapel. After being taken to her poor cell, she regained consciousness but was plagued with severe headaches thereafter, so that she was forced to remain in bed. On February 8, the anniversary of her mother's death, she asked and received permission, if her strength permitted, to attend Holy Mass in the chapel. During Mass she again fainted, because of a hemorrhage of the brain, as diagnosed by the doctor.

She was now confined to her bed. After a slight improvement, new and more violent headaches set in, which lasted four weeks without interruption. She was fully conscious and accepted these pains as the participation in Christ's crowning with thorns, which

she had requested. During the night of February 27, she grew steadily worse, and when told of her condition, she asked to receive the Holy Eucharist as Viaticum, and the Anointing of the Sick.

With the greatest devotion she received the Sacraments. After this she closed her eyes and remained so until March 4, speaking but little to the attending Sister. Sobering words that she spoke during this time were, "The judgments of the Lord are inscrutably severe. What are honor and reputation? What good do they do us at the hour of death?" Was she reviewing her past life in the light of God's all-knowing scrutiny? Or was she trying still to impress her ideal of humility upon those she would leave behind? We do not know. Msgr. Jacquemin and the Franciscan Fathers came to render her spiritual assistance in her last illness, and Bishop Doebbing visited her and recommended to her his diocese and the whole Church.

March 5, the first Sunday of the month and the day of solemn adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, found Mother Frances much weaker but still able to receive Holy Communion. She then requested the prayers of all the Sisters and begged that pardon be asked of everyone she might have hurt or offended. The prayers for the dying were recited for her, while someone assisted her in holding the candle. Her dying was slow and painful. Each time when the prayers were finished, she rallied somewhat, and then again fell into the death agony. Msgr. Jacquemin brought her a special blessing from Pope Pius X, with a plenary indulgence for the hour of death, which comforted her greatly.

About four in the morning of March 6, the agony began anew. Mother Frances began to moan aloud and the sweat of death appeared on her forehead. She gave signs of great fear. For three hours this lasted! Msgr. Jacquemin went to the chapel to celebrate Holy Mass. It was the feast of St. Coletta. At the *Gloria* of the Mass the tinkle of the bell from the sick room summoned all from the chapel to the dying foundress, where Msgr. Jacquemin prayed aloud the *Stabat Mater* with the Sisters and imparted the

General Absolution. She received it with full consciousness. As the clock struck seven, Mother Frances gave back her pure, virginal soul to her Creator and her Lord, "to ascend in pleasing fragrance to God."

Her venerable remains were laid out a few hours later in the boys' hall of the institute. When the people of the vicinity heard that the pious, humble, and modest Sister had died, they came in throngs to see and venerate the "saint," as they called her. School benches were placed around the casket as barriers to prevent the people from cutting off pieces of her clothing or taking whatever they could as relics. When the Sisters exhorted the people to pray for the dear departed, they answered, "Mother Frances does not need our prayers; she is a saint and must pray for us." Upon hearing that she was the foundress of the community, they were astonished beyond measure.

The entire congregation of Castel San Elia therefore wished to provide for a solemn Funeral Mass for Mother Frances, who had done so much good among them. The mayor himself issued an invitation by displaying posters in public, a mark of unusual distinction. At the Funeral Mass on March 9, Bishop Doebbing gave the address in the parish church, stressing that founders of religious communities must expect unusually great sufferings, for they must be purified in the furnace of affliction. He knew this because he had been personally involved in the removal from office of Mother Frances Streitel, and he felt he had to make public amends for his action by this public statement. He knew Mother Frances had reached the heights of Calvary and stood beneath the cross with the Sorrowful Mother, so that by dying to self she might serve the Lord, as all those present well knew.

Mother Frances did not wish to be buried in Rome but rather in that small spot in the valley which had been the resting place of so many saints for many centuries. The bishop told the people what a great honor it was to have a religious foundress buried in their midst. The faithful understood and knelt down in the streets

as Mother Frances was carried to her grave, to beg her blessing for themselves and their families.

The indelible impression she made on the people who knew and saw her during her lifetime in Castel San Elia is recorded by the words of Mayor Crispigni himself:

I remember seeing her praying in church for half a day on one occasion and hearing all the Masses. Often I asked myself how a human being could endure this — to be on her knees all the time and at her age! I was even more astounded at her great humility when I heard that she was the foundress of the community! She always conducted herself like an ordinary Sister. She cared for the children as the least of all, washing and tending the little ones with great love.<sup>5</sup>

Another tribute is from one of her charges in Castel San Elia, who later became Vicar Provincial of the Pallottine Fathers. He wrote:

I spent the most beautiful years of my early youth in that place, years which decided my spiritual formation and led me to choose the religious life and priesthood. As a child I knew Mother Frances. At the time of her death I was ten years old, but her image will never fade from my memory. Even today, after so many years, I can most clearly state my impressions of that time.

Mother Frances appeared among us children like a mother full of solicitude, kindness and love. Her patience in enduring our childish faults was admirable and exemplary. Her ability in adapting herself to our childish ways, needs, and desires was amazing. She led a humble and hidden life, and although she was the foundress, she appeared to us as an ordinary Sister, especially on account of her simple ways. With kindness and humility she knew how to attract us. She was among us like a vision of heavenly goodness. We tried to look into her eyes, but she always had them humbly cast down. We boys envied the girls because we could not be with her as long as they. I remember sometimes that we even sought reasons and excuses to go to the girls' section, just to see Mother Frances and drink in some of her goodness. To sum up my impressions of her I may say that I

was deeply touched above all by her humility, so great and profound, her desire to be hidden and to conceal her identity as Mother Foundress, and her virtues and undoubted holiness. Our mothers often sought her out for instruction and advice. She was their guide and comfort. As proof of her deep humility, I wish to remark particularly, that in caring for the children, she preferred the smallest ones because these needed the most menial care. And she did this with plain, natural efficiency, with motherly kindness and great love.

At her death the whole community mourned; the grown-up people wept; we children passed by her body in silence, deeply moved. Eagerly we gazed upon her features and her eyes now closed forever. The Sisters who taught us always spoke of her with the greatest reverence as an exceedingly kind Mother, a true and holy religious. When I grew up, I admired the growth of her Community and reflected on so many things which at that time I did not yet understand. Today I am fully convinced that Mother Frances was an extraordinary person who lived a life of holiness in humility and seclusion, with the sole desire of pleasing God. . . .<sup>6</sup>

ROME, FEBRUARY 18, 1945

*P. Joseph Ranocchini*  
*Vicar Provincial*

Mother Frances' grave was in the valley under the shadow of mighty cypress trees, surrounded by high walls of rock, beside the venerable Basilica of St. Elias, scarcely a ten-minute walk from the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Cliffs, where she spent so many hours in prayer for herself, the community, and the Church.

Human words fail to describe the feelings and sentiments that arise within us as we stand on that cracked, brick floor of the little room in which Mother Frances died, with its few necessary furnishings and faded pictures on the wall. Deep are our thoughts as we walk down the steep steps cut into the rock by a hermit, to Our Lady of the Cliffs behind the iron grill, knowing that here, in this spot, Mother Frances lived a truly Franciscan life in intimate union with God, in everyday activity combined with deep contemplative prayer. Our hearts can only stammer that we



too may become “imitators of God as His most dear children, and WALK IN LOVE, as Christ also loved us, and delivered Himself up for us, an offering, and a pleasing sacrifice to God, to ascend in pleasing fragrance” (Eph 5:2).



# CHAPTER 9

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## **Cause for Beatification**



“I SAW BEFORE ME A HUGE CROWD  
WHICH NO ONE COULD COUNT FROM  
EVERY NATION AND RACE, PEOPLE  
AND TONGUE” (Revelation 7:9)

“ . . . he who humbles  
himself shall be exalted”  
(Luke 14:11).

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St. Peter's Basilica was brilliantly illuminated for the magnificent event of a beatification ceremony. Aquilin Reichert, a novice in the Order of Friars Minor in the year 1910 was in attendance. He saw the face and veil worn by the new *beata*, who was a Sister, but suddenly, before the curtain which veiled the picture had dropped entirely to reveal the whole figure, he awoke from his strange dream and found himself in his own bed at home, in his monastery in Würzburg!

Father Aquilin Reichert, O.F.M.Conv., who became the postulator of the Cause for the beatification of Mother Frances Streitel in the year 1936, came to Rome in 1922 as German confessor in the community of penitentiaries of St. Peter's Basilica. This community lived close to Borgo Santo Spirito, 41, which was still the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother at the time. He knew nothing about this community of Sisters, except that in 1911, as a university student, he had once seen Father Jordan. His first visit to the motherhouse surprised both him and the Sisters, for he recognized the garb he had seen in his dream and related to the Sisters this remarkable incident. When shown a picture of the foundress, he exclaimed, “Yes, that was she!”

He then inquired whether her life had been written and was told there was no biography of her as yet. Mother Johanna, the superior general, and her vicaress, Sister Wendelina Bauer, thereupon asked him to collect material in preparation for a short biog-

raphy of the foundress. As much of the material in the archives had been burned at the beginning of World War I, he searched at the Vicariate in Rome and at the motherhouse of the Salvatorian Fathers; he visited the Sisters of *Maria Stern* in Würzburg and Augsburg, and the Sisters at the Carmel of *Himmelspforten*. He then went to Bamberg and Munich, where the Streitel family told him many things about her early life. He received information and letters from Father Joch, but most important were the 101 letters and the Norms of Mother Frances which he received from the archives of the Salvatorians in 1924, to be copied and returned.<sup>1</sup> Much valuable information came also from the aged Sisters who had known the foundress personally.

From all this and from material in the Community Chronicle, in 1932 he wrote a short biography of Mother Frances in German, which was printed for and by the Sisters and which later served as a source in the composing of the "Articles" for the witnesses in the Diocesan Process.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after Mother Frances had departed this life, the fame of her sanctity became more widely known, and many favors received were attributed to her intercession. An outstanding example was the sudden cure of Sister Conradina Harrer in Vienna of a serious case of head influenza affecting her sanity, a cure which took place on March 6, 1936, the 25th anniversary of the death of the foundress.

Encouraged by this evidence of the powerful intercession of Mother Frances, Mother Wendelina Bauer, who was then the superior general, took steps to have the Cause introduced, with Father Aquilin as postulator. On November 12, 1936, Bishop Luigi Maria Olivares of the Diocese of Sutri and Nepi, wrote to her that he had no objection to the beginning of the Diocesan Process in his diocese, where Mother Frances had died, nor to the assignment of Father Aquilin as postulator. Approval for the initiation of the Diocesan Process was received on February 22, 1937, feast of St. Peter's Chair at Antioch.

Between 1937 and 1940, the Diocesan Process, dealing with

the canonical examination of her writings, of her reputation for sanctity, and of obedience to Pope Urban VIII's decree forbidding that any public cult be paid to her, was conducted in Nepi. During the same time rogatorial processes were conducted in the Dioceses of Paterson and Winona in the United States, and in the Diocese of Würzburg in Germany. Upon the closing of the Diocesan Process in 1940, the Sacred Congregation of Rites took over the work and after examining the writings, declared that nothing could be found to hinder the advancement of the Cause.

Meanwhile many letters of recommendation for the introduction of the Cause of Beatification by the Holy See were sent to the Holy Father by two cardinals, many archbishops, bishops, superiors general of men and women religious orders and communities, and others. In 1947, the Apostolic Process was initiated with the decree of June 13, signed by Pope Pius XII. After two years, this Process on the specific virtues of Mother Frances was closed, and the Acts were transferred from Nepi to the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Father Aquilin continued to work steadily toward bringing the Cause forward. Progress was slow at times, and a further setback was suffered with the illness and death of Pope Pius XII in 1958. In 1963, Pope John XXIII gave permission for the Process to continue, and the following year it was reopened. In 1968, during the pontificate of Paul VI, the postulator, Father Aquilin Reichert, was called to his eternal reward, and Father Adalbert Heusinger, O.F.M., took over the work temporarily, until the appointment of Father Antonio Cairoli, O.F.M., in 1971.

In the years between 1883 and 1885, there were three persons whose paths in life crossed as they struggled to know and carry out the will of God — Mother Frances Streitel, Father Francis Jordan, and Sister Theresa von Wuellenweber. None of them surmised that before a century had run its course, all three would be candidates for beatification in the Church. Sister Theresa — Mother Mary of the Apostles — foundress of the Salvatorian Sisters, was the first to be given the title of "Blessed." She was

beatified in 1968. Father Jordan's Cause was initiated during World War II and, like the Cause of Mother Frances, is still in progress. It is with prayerful anticipation that the spiritual daughters of Mother Frances look forward to the beatification of their humble, poor, God-loving foundress.

May that day all glorious  
Be not far hence, we pray,  
When we shall say with filial trust,  
Blessed Frances Streitel, pray for us!  
Pray for the whole Catholic Church  
Which you so dearly loved;  
And for us, your Sisters,  
That we may be found worthy  
To stand beneath the cross  
With Mary, our Mother,  
And share her sorrows,  
Her joys,  
Her glory!<sup>3</sup>



# Footnotes

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## INTRODUCTION

1. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5, Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Walter M. Abbott, S.J., The America Press, c1966, p. 470.
2. *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 1

1. Sister M. Scholastica Demer, SSM, unpublished notes on early community history, 1927; tr. from the German by Sister M. Theophile Venne, SSM, p. 7.
2. Aquilin Reichert, O.F.M.Conv., *Mother Frances Streitel — Her Life and Work* (Milwaukee: Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, 1948), p. 2.
3. "Germany: Since 1789," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1966, VI, 442.
4. English Ladies (Englische Fräulein), the title by which the Institute of Mary, founded by Mary Ward, is known in Germany and other countries.
5. Reichert, p. 6.
6. Ronald Lawler, O.F.M.Cap., and Donald Wuerl, *The Teaching of Christ* (Huntington, Ind., Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1976), p. 478.
7. Sister M. Bona Ney, S.S.M., tr., "Former House of Parents of Foundress, Now Brother Conrad Home, Weyhers, Fulda," *Ave Mater Dolorosa* (A.M.D.), 1978, XLVI, 151-53.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Reichert, *Mother Frances Streitel — Her Life and Work*, p. 15.
2. Letter, Sister Angela Streitel to Bishop Pancratius von Dinkel, September, 1881.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Reichert, p. 17.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
6. Letter, Sister Angela to Bishop Pancratius, September, 1881.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Reichert, p. 25.
10. Letter, Sister Angela to Bishop Pancratius, September, 1881.
11. Sister M. Bona Ney, S.S.M., "The Kppele," *Ave Mater Dolorosa*, September, 1967, XXXVI, 117-18.

12. Reichert, p. 23.
13. Letter, Sister Angela to Bishop Pancratius, September, 1881.

### CHAPTER 3

1. The convent into which Sister Angela was received at the time she was transferred is now a diocesan retreat house, as it became too cumbersome for the small number of Carmelite nuns to administer. In 1925 a smaller convent was built for them within the walls of the monastery, which also encloses the old church. Cf. Dr. Hugo Schnell, Kunstführer No. 1012, Himmelspforten, Würzburg (Verlag Schnell & Steiner, Munich, 1974).
2. Reichert, p. 33.
3. Letter 17, Mother Frances to Father Jordan, March 31, 1883. All citations of Mother Frances' letters to Father Jordan, except for changes in wording in letters of March 28 and April 16, 1883, are taken from the *Ave Mater Dolorosa*, Supplement 5, translated from the German by Sisters M. Lioba and Louise Suellentrop, S.S.M.
4. *Ibid.*, Letter 86, July 16, 1883.

### CHAPTER 4

1. Letter, Sister M. Stanisla of Jesus to Sister Petra, December 29, 1882, translated from the German by Sister M. T. Venne.
2. Gabriel Stapleton, S.D.S., *God's Foolish General* (St. Nazianz, Wisconsin, Salvatorian Publishing Department, 1956), p. 7.
3. Sister M. Scholastica Demer, S.S.M., unpublished notes reworked chronologically, translated from the German by Sister M. Louise Suellentrop, S.S.M., p. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
6. Father Luethen's doubts about Thecla Bayer's vocation as foundress led to his excluding her entirely from the Catholic Teaching Society shortly after her illness in Munich. Later she appeared in the founding history of the Servant of God, Maria Bernarda Buetler. Cf. Alfred B. Schneble, S.D.S., "Father Jordan's Intentions with His Sisters, 1883-85," *Historica S.D.S.*, no. 77, translated from the German by Venne.
7. Letter 1, Mother Frances to Father Jordan, February 16, 1883.
8. *Ibid.*, Letter 3, February 20, 1883.
9. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5, p. 470.
10. *Ibid.*, 6, p. 470-71.
11. Sister M. Scholastica Demer, unpublished notes, reworked chronologically, 1927, pp. 5-6.
12. Letter 8, Mother Frances to Father Jordan, March 14, 1883.
13. Alfred B. Schneble, S.D.S., "Father Jordan's Personal Notes about His Sisters in Rome, 1883-85," *Historica S.D.S.*, no. 73. (Medellin, Colombia, S. A.), Jan. 30, 1976. Mimeographed. Translated from the German by Sister M. Louise Suellentrop, S.S.M.

14. Letter 25, Mother Frances to Father Jordan, June 25, 1883.
15. Sister M. Scholastica Demer, unpublished notes, 1927, p. 5.
16. The location of this seminary is not known.
17. The foregoing details on the life of Mother Johanna (Elizabeth Ankenbrand) are taken from her own unpublished account written in 1890; translated by Sister M. Damascene Sontag, S.S.M.
18. Pope John Paul II, "Why Lenten Fasting?" General audience of Wednesday, March 21, 1979, *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 26, 1979, p. 1.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 1 and 12.
20. Schneble, "Father Jordan's Second Order and the Franciscan Third Order," *Historica S.D.S.*, no. 75.
21. Community Chronicle, Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother; translated from the German, *Ave Mater Dolorosa*, Supplement 1, 1975, p. 16.
22. Pancratius Pfeiffer, S.D.S., *Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan*, translated from the German by Winifred Herbst, S.D.S. (St. Nazianz, Wis., The Society of the Divine Savior, 1936), p. 50.
23. Letter 17, March 31, 1883, and Letter 4, February 21, 1883, respectively, Mother Frances to Father Jordan.
24. Letter, Bishop Pancratius to Father Jordan, May 4, 1884; translated from the German by Venne.
25. Letter 174 in *Documenta e Studia Salvatoriana* (Rome, Italy, Society of the Divine Savior, 1974), v. X, p. 126; tr. from the German by Venne.
26. M. Avellina, S.D.S., *Ich Suche und Suchte* (Kevelaer Rhld, Verlag Butzon und Bercker, 1952), p. 76; translated from the German by Venne.
27. Schneble, "Father Jordan's Intentions with His Sisters, 1883/85," *Historica S.D.S.*, no. 77.
28. *Ibid.*, no. 97.
29. Letter, Sister Lucie, Sister of Christian Doctrine, to Father Jordan, September 17, 1884; translated from the French by Sister M. Basilla Thoma, S.S.M.
30. Philip Caraman, S.J., *Man's Concern with Holiness*, edited by Marina Chavchavadze (London, Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., c1970), p. 100.
31. Letter, Bishop Pancratius to Father Jordan, December 12, 1884.
32. Reichert, p. 83.
33. Schneble, "Father Jordan's Petition to the Pope, February, 1885," *Historica S.D.S.*, no. 76.
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Divine Savior. He visited the U.S. and made a foundation of the Salvatorians at St. Nazianz, Wisconsin. He died 1918, and his cause of beatification was introduced. Cf. *New Cath. Encyclopedia*, VII, 1101.)

The first Sisters of Mother Streitel's congregation came to the U.S. in 1888, and made St. Francis Hospital, Wichita, their first foundation in this country (Dec. 11, 1889). Mother Streitel visited the U.S. three times: 1890, 1891, and 1895-1896.

Returning to Europe, because of accusations raised against her, Mother Frances was deposed from the office of superior general by Father Jacquemin. She accepted this cross with humble resignation and never said a word to defend herself against the accusations. She remained a member of the community and lived in retirement until her death at Castel San Elia, Italy, in 1911.

In 1911 the Diocesan Process for her Cause of Beatification was begun in the diocese of Nepi and Sutri, Italy. The Apostolic Process, in the same diocese, followed in 1947; and the documents were taken to Rome in 1949. Having become a dormant cause, it was reopened in 1963. In 1971, Father Cairolì, the Franciscan Postulator General became the Postulator for Mother Streitel's Cause.

From Italy, the Franciscan Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother spread not only to the U.S. but also to Germany, Austria, and the West Indies. In the Official Catholic Directory of the U.S. they are number (110), and their name is indicated by the letters SSM. There are three Provinces in the U.S.: Denville, N.J., Milwaukee, Tulsa, with total membership of 396. They conduct hospitals, teach in schools, and are engaged in other various apostolates. The General Motherhouse is in Rome.

**Sister M. Carmeline Koller** is a member of the Community of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, founded by Mother Frances Streitel, whose biography Sister has written. For many years she has held the position of teacher, organist, and choir director.

She holds a B.A. from Mount Mary College, a B.M. in organ, and a M.M. in piano from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She has written plays, skits, jubilee odes, and vocational material for her community. She is a native of Wisconsin and has traveled abroad, visiting the shrines of Rome, Assisi, and other places in Italy, especially those sacred to the memory of her revered foundress.

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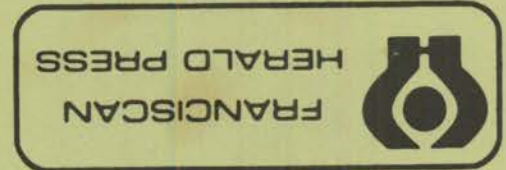
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