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Advent 2019 - Advent 2020

Hearty and thankful greetings go out in this preparation time for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to our dear brothers and sisters and all those, who are close to our convent.

The meaning of waiting, hoping and expecting is clearly understandable in this days of the year, because since Friday, March the 13th. we experienced often, indeed. At this Friday we got the message that we must close our guesthouse due to corona. However, one weekend group was already there and stayed. As with many guests through the year, this was a really nice meeting, too. We got very positive feedback from: Single-guests, Pilgrims, Retreats, guided tours for herbs and our monastery, further educations in catechetics and farming. We are thankful for being able to offer this courses in our house. In between we were allowed to take guests again, but since the first of November, we had to close everything again due to corona, as meanwhile everyone knows. That's why I start my report with the corona-issue, because all are eager to hear how our community fared with that. We and our customers tried hard to keep all rules, which were decided on our hygiene-concept. Nevertheless we couldn't escape from corona. Sister Nieves was infected in a rehab-hospital after her leg-amputation caused by blood-circulation-disorder. The day she should go home, her corona-test was positive. That meant isolation for her again - and for sister Bernadette and our oblate sister Luke, too, because they were in contact with sister Nieves. We are very grateful that sister Nieves didn't show any symptoms at all. After her discharge she had to go to quarantine at home for 10 days still. It was burden and strain even we could minimize our contacts to outsiders.

For the following circumstance we were very thankful, too: our spiritual father Matthäus Sandrock OSB lived with us and celebrated our daily holy mass, especially good Friday and Easter during the first lockdown. As soon as the rules were not that strict anymore, we celebrated our Mai-worships our park outside. The birds supported our singing there. The 40th profess jubilee of Mother Mechthild OSB was celebrated on the 27th of April in our monastic family. A party with guests was set for Mai, 2nd postponed to December, 5th and now again postponed to next

year. Mother emerita Gertraud Reiter OSB celebrated her 65th profess jubilee on August, 29th. Our auxiliary bishop Herwig Gössl visited the festival service. Relatives, Friends of the group „Light and Time“, Oblates and volunteers joined the celebration, too.

At the beginning of the year we depend our religious life trough retreats, given by father Ludger Feldkämper, SVD, who worked many Years in the biblical research foundation in Stuttgart. As he knows our sisters in the Philippines well, too, he gave classes in German and English language.

On January, 7th. Sister Carmen Pestano OSB celebrated her 90th birthday. Nieces from overseas visited her for that occasion and on January, 19th. we celebrated again with friends and oblates. Sister Carmen hold a long thankful free speech. In the following months she got weaker and after a short bedridden time she died on September 9th. in the hospital Bamberg in the presence of sister Luke. Rev. Archbishop Dr. Ludwig Schick read requiem-mass and burial. Sister Carmen asked the archbishop herself for that favor after the burial of sister Milagros Espiritu OSB, when the archbishop visited her in the infirmary. Sister Milagros died July 10th at the age of 95 years. Because the archbishop represented our sick spiritual father Matthäus Sandrock OSB at the feast of Saint Benedict, he was willing to help out on the burial of sister Milagros as well.

Two sisters less means a big gap in our community. But the lord consoled us and made us happy again. On September 12th, our postulant Marie-Louise was clothed and got her new name: Sr. M. Faustina of the Eucharistic King, OSB. It was a nice feast, even only a few visitors came because of corona. The white veil gives hope for future entering. Sister Faustina reinforces our community, beautifies our divine office singing and other musical events.

As to expect, older sisters are more often sick and show other limitations. With help of sister Assumpta OSB and our oblates sister Carola and sister Luke, Mrs. Patricia Bontjes, Mrs. Ingrid Obermeit and Sylvia Groh it was possible to care for our sisters on our own. Physical therapists, Sylvia Braun and family doctor Christoph Ott cared for them as well. God reward everyone!

As already mentioned, our spiritual got sick and his condition went worse. He had to go to hospital and was not able to return afterwards. Abbot

Michael - with a heavy heart - brought the message that he can no more send any spiritual to us. A heavy stroke! We are grateful to the Abbey of Münsterschwarzach for their support and priests through all the years. We will miss father Matthäus very much. He was not complicated at all, always friendly, open and kindly disposed towards us. He also knew mother foundress and had visited our sisters in the Philippines. God bless him and may give him much joy with his community in Münsterschwarzach. From now on we were searching for a new spiritual. Our Archbishop himself celebrated mass with us during this time and made proposals for several priests. We are grateful to those priests for celebrating mass for us at our used time. Not a single day we had to miss holy mass. Since September 1st. Rev. Father Hans-Werner Alt is our new spiritual. We are happy about that.

Growing vegetables meant this year watering the plants. With the exception of salad, everything got ripe and we had a great harvest. We expanded our vegetable-cultivation and sold via our own store and more middleman. Though, we needed for all different kinds of vegetables and potatoes many staff. Many honorary workers helped out, for which we are grateful. Potatoes are already sold out, unfortunately grain did not ripe well, because rain was missing.

We hit the headlines this year with our engagement for asylum. In Spring Mother Mechthild got an order of summary punishment for 2.500,00 €, which she doesn't want to pay until now, because she is not conscious of any punishable action. There's not yet a court decision, because the process was delayed due to corona to July 31st, and again delayed because of two other new cases. The court will make the decision for all three cases. Many religious and private persons, e.g. cardinal of curia Czerny, the episcopal conference, protestant bishop Bedford-Strohm, Missio-Aachen, Abbesses and Prioresses from Germany, Netherlands and so on are giving support to Mother Mechthild. The radio and television (ZDF) broadcasted interviews with Mother Mechthild. On Mai 6th. she will get the peace-prize-award of Göttingen. Let us hope and pray for conversion in mind for those who are responsible for asylum seekers in hopeless situations.

One Syrian refugee family, who was divided four and a half year, we helped to bring together again through the (also financial) help of

friends. It was a great joy when the father could embrace his wife and his the daughters (age 6, 8, 12 years) at the airport.

Many courses were cancelled due to corona. Unfortunately the „Lectio divina“ with Sr. Elisabeth OSB from Eichstätt and a seminar for contemplation with deacon Goldmann. On the other hand we were happy about pilgrims and the Bavarian pilgrims-office, who came short-term. On weekends Christine Helmrich hold guidances about herbs, which were booked up.

One gift was also, that we were able to sell our candles on the farmers market. There are still people in our environs who don't know us jet and are coming afterwards for divine-office, holy mass and to buy candles, of course.

Our oblate meeting was very restricted. On the feast of Saint Benedict on July 11th, Sr. Maria Antonia made her oblation and Sr. Luke was admitted to the probationary year. Brother Johannes and Elija were not able to do that, because of corona. But in their hearts they are close to our community.

In autumn we started to renovate the first floor in case to save energy and beautify our monastery. New windows, paint and new floor covering were the first steps. We got some honorary workers for that, too.

May god bless all our friends, honorary workers, employed, and all who support us through their prayers, financial gifts and advices!

Let us wait, expect and hope for improvement in the following topics:

- religious renewal in our country
- ending of corona
- aspirants and candidates for our benedictine community and for oblation
- honorary workers
- getting along well with each other
- Birth of our lord and savior in our hearts: especially this and good health we wish you all!

Mother Mechthild Thürmer and Community