

Benediktinerinnen der Abtei Maria Frieden, Kirchsulletten 30, 96199 Zapfendorf

**Advent 2016 - Advent 2017**

**We are richly endowed**

Dear readers of this letter,

we are richly endowed - is what I immediately think regarding the last year and how fast it went by. „Breath of wind, all is a breath of wind“ and „There is a time for everything“, I read in the book of Kohelet. Looking back I cannot agree with the breath of the wind. Because what happened was in the presence of God and fruitful. We cannot always immediately see and calculate it. However there are always opportunities and encounters which proof, that so many things were precious and important, solacing and encouraging. That is why we want to be here and live. „To know that we were in your prayers gave us much joy“, is what I read on a card. Also because of this I think we all are richly endowed.

The letter, by many awaited and enjoyed, shall be in chronological order.

On the first Advent we had a weekend for our Oblates and there were more following in May, July, October and again on this first of Advent. We were also richly endowed on Saturday, the 20th of May, 2017 with four new members, which we could invite for the trainee year of the oblates. Now even two new are waiting to join them.

The first group of guests in the new beginning year of the church were former employees of the administrative district office as well as retired firefighters with their partners. We are also endowed with those people that selflessly offer their help to others in need. Also many groups came for Exerzitionen, Seminars, education and also for recreation. Sometimes the guests even had to sleep on matraces since all the beds were already taken. Most guests come on the weekend. During the week there are less. There sometimes groups of the Ökoakademie Bamberg and groups for medical education as for example the therapy in breathing and the Psychoonkology. Events which are center around our garden of herbs gain more popularity. By the rainy weather our herbs were growing very well this year and could be further processed into tee and herbal salts. In this job we were able to include also blind people. We got to know them in May when they were taking days of retreat in our place. These days were shaped by the fact, that one can still be satisfied even though dealing with these constraints. Firmlinge from Zapfendorf as their good deed

during the Firmvorbereitung accompanied this group to a trip to Kulmbach into the museum of spices. They have been lauded for their efforts. In this way, all felt richly endowed.

The first pilgrims, the group „Eisbrecher“ from Bamberg, already came on the 14th of January. We were always ecunemical. The group was lead by the evangelic priest Miss Kowalski. Following there were also single, small and big groups up to even busses of pilgrims that found their way to us. I would like to emphasize on two groups: On 25th June the Heinrichsspatzen from the parish of St. Heinrich in Bamberg were visiting. There were children and adolescences enriching the mass with their beautiful singing and pilgrimages with different stations. The climax was the mess with priest Höfer in our church filled with young people. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of Sept. the perishes of the Oberen Pfarre as well as the Dompfarrei from Bamberg did their pilgrimage to us by foot, with the bike or six came with the bus. The Holy Mass with the new Dompfarrer Dr. Markus Kohmann was at 13.00 followed by a franconian lunch with more than 100 pilgrims. Richly endowed by our helper in the kitchen and from the Oblatenkreis this special day went by. Along I would like to mention the night-pilgrims from Bad Staffelstein which every year stop in our place the night before the ordination of priests. At 1.30 Uhr they have a devotion in our church and rest in the guesthouse St. Benedikt. Many pilgrims included also us in their prayers.

Especially for new members in our community. We are especially endowed by those prayers.

In the beginning of the year from 06<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> Jan. we were also endowed with spiritual enlightenment by the Jahresexerzition of H.H. Vater Abt Beda Sonnenberg OSB. The topic of these days were the big prayers of the Holy Mass as the Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Sanctus and Agnus Dei. From 05<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> of Feb. our Philippine sisters could refresh and deepen their spiritual life through the Exerzitionen with P. Joe Übelmesser SJ.

P. Martin Birk OSB from the Abtei Münsterschwarzach visited regularly to give the Sakrament of reconciliation followed by conferences for our Philippine sisters. P. Germar Neubert OSB from Münsterschwarzach came as a second confessor in the middle of the year. Due to health issues he asked to resign from this duty so P. Joe Übelmesser took over this wonderful duty.

We are richly endowed by the Sakrament through which we get god compassion. Every day we receive HIM in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. P. Dr. Placidus Berger OSB from the Abtei Münsterschwarzach celebrated with us almost daily the holy Eucharist with us. For 12 years he served as a pastor in the surrounding parishes as well as in the hospital in Scheßlitz. Now to the end of the year he is going back to the Abtei Münsterschwarzach. We are very grateful for his service in the last 12 years. His religious brother P. Matthäus Sandrock OSB will join us instead. We thank Vater Abt Michael and the convent from Münsterschwarzach for enabling us to celebrate the holy Hl. Eucharist.

Apart from the pastoral work we also have other normal as well as special duties in our house, the guest-house, agriculture and workshop of wax that offer a variety of work that sometimes can be very intense, depending on the dates on the weather. This demands organization. We are richly endowed by our own skills and health that let us fulfill these daily deeds. We are also richly endowed by helpers that identify themselves with our community. Also we are richly endowed by all the volunteers. This circle of people also grew in the last year. God is blessing us by always sending a helping hand in the right moment. Together we achieved a lot. I cannot mention everything but I can mention a few things:

- many doors and windows are repainted
- the wainscot of the Infirmary- and Kitchenbuilding is repainted
- the facilities are in a good state and are barrier-free
- the roof of the Sakristei is fixed
- there are now steel rods for hanging the clothes in the washing house
- there are now edge protections
- old electric cable, lamps and racks are renewed
- we have new shelves in the Refektorium
- we have new cushions in the church
- in the refectory the roof is fixed and new lamps are installed for better lighting
- many children of the first communion have made their candles
- we participated in the vacationally program of the county with two events
- and many more....

We are also richly endowed by big celebrations and important visits. Archbishop Prof. Dr. Ludwig Schick came to the golden anniversary of the monastic vows of our Subpriorin Sr. M. Hedwig Domondon OSB on the 11<sup>th</sup> July. Numerous guests celebrated with him and us this special event. Also Minister of economic collaboration and development Dr. Gerd Müller and our

local representative in the German parliament Emmi Zeulner came on 11<sup>th</sup> July to inform us about the necessity of the economic collaboration and especially the support of the distressed people of poor countries in Africa. „Deutschlands Zukunft in einer globalisierten Welt“ (Germany's future in a globalized world) was the topic and many people from Ober- and Unterfranken came. The Security as well as the police were astonished how well H. Dickert along with other firefighters managed the parking and traffic situation. A heartfelt „Vergelt's Gott!“ for his volunteering work.

Our H. H. Weihbischof H. Herwig Gösl came on 14<sup>th</sup> of May for celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> praying hour. Numerous prayers and musicians, that participated over the last 25 years, came. Our church was really crowded. We were very happy that H. H. Weihbischof conducted the vesper and stayed for dinner.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October P. Roberto Turyamureeba MCCJ from Uganda came and brought with him bishop Joachim Ouédraogo from the diocese of Koudougou Burkina Faso. After the prayer at noon, lunch and a tour through our monastery they drove together with Mutter Mechthild OSB to the school in Zapfendorf. The children were enthusiastic and one even asked at the end: „Will the pope also come to us now?“

I also would like to mention two visitors from overseas. They came especially because two of our sisters were in trouble with their health. Sr. M. Carmen Pestano OSB had massive constraints because of her health. She could be released for the hospital with an oxygen mask. We fear, that she might not be with us for a long time. So her sister with her niece Oya took a long journey. The reunification surely helped a lot, what a gift! On the Monday of Easter Sr. M. Nieves OSB developed serious health issues. She was examined and observed in the clinic of Bamberg. After a preliminary release she had to undergo surgery in the end. Her Cousine Precy accompanied her for six weeks. Slowly she came back to her beloved work in the garden and the kitchen. We are thankful to our doctors H. Dr. Ott und Fr. Dr. Braun, the doctors and sisters in the clinic in Bamberg, the Caritas-Sozialstation Hallstadt, the physiotherapists and all that help us with the problems due to illness or age in a competent, patient, trustful and sympathetic way. Further gifts were beneficial concerts and other concerts: On the 06<sup>th</sup> of May the choir „Go(O)d-Vibration“ from Egenhausen and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July with „Tre Fontane“. The group GREGORIANICA visited on the 08<sup>th</sup> of Sept our crowded church. They will probably come again next year. Another beneficial concert was done by the group Inspiration from Memmelsdorf on 17<sup>th</sup> of Sept. 2017. In the beginning of the new church calendar we are having a next concert on Saturday the 09<sup>th</sup> of Dez. at 16.00 with our Sr. M. Felizitas Kaneko OSB and Miss and Mister Kawaochi as well as Miss Masako Saito.

Exchange and education is important for young people. Sr. Bernadette Mayr OSB visited regularly the meeting for educating the novices and spend on this matter a full week in St. Ottilien in November. A young woman joined us for four weeks this year and has the strong wish to join our community. In these days an interested woman knocked on our doors. Please help with your prayers such that we will be richly endowed also in this case.

We foster our connection to the Benedictine communities through meetings of abbots and through the compassion on the voyage home of Sr. Benedikta Frick OSB from Abtei Frauenwörth and Abt Dr. Odilo Lechner from St. Bonifaz in Munich.

Despite the cold during the blossom we could harvest some apples, pears, ringlo, small yellow plums, walnuts, currants and strawberries. We are richly endowed because in many regions there was a poor crop.

We never had so many different vegetables. An intern of agriculture, Herr Bauer, planned and planted with many helpers. We then harvested. We are endowed.

It was a hard year in the agriculture due to the weather. However, due to the persisting work of H. Andreas Schwab we can be happy and thankful for a satisfying revenue. Because we are thankful and had some helping hands from eritrea, we have this year - since ca. 20 years - manufactured again a crown of crops and hops from a former intern from Lilling. Another example of being endowed.

The helping hands from eritrea are the hands of young women that we are granting safety by asylum. The stories of life and refuge are worth of compassion. Right now two of these women are pregnant - searching for a home before christmas. We are endowed by volunteers that give lessons in german and are helping for a successful integration.

Sadly Frau Bechtle who helped us six years in many ways, left us and moved to Bremen. A heartfelt „Vergelt´s Gott!“ to her.

To people that were close to our community and supported us in many ways left us and went home to the creator. On 06<sup>th</sup> of Sept we heard that one of our first Oblatinnen, Sr. Gabriele Jansen, died by the age of 83 years. She was buried in the cemetery of our monastery since she did not have any relatives. By the age of almost 89 years the earthly life of the mother of our mother Mechthild OSB, Frau Maria Thürmer, ended. She took her sickness bravely since she could not eat or drink for nine years. She could spend all the years with her family that took care of her in a lovely way. Now we have two more advocates in heaven. May the rest in Gods peace.

At the end of this letter there shall be a small excursion to the Philippinen. Our monastery in Mindoro send us a request for help at the end of january. The Taifun „Nina“ destroyed right after christmas the monastery, the greenhouse, the fruit plantations (Mango- and banana trees unrooted) and the washing house. Send a request for help through the two local newspapers FT and Obermaintageblatt. The response was very great. Again and again we got calls that the revenue of a concert, a collection of clothes, a lenten-meal, of a birthday party and many more were given to us for helping i this situation. We were impressed and thankful by the selfless deeds of the people from all over Oberfranken for our sisters in distress. By our archbishop, whom we also asked for help, our sister received a large amount of money. Richly endowed for the purpose of help we give to everyone one a „Vergelt´s Gott!“ We gladly include the concerns of all that helped in our prayers.

There is much more to tell and some of it and also what is planned in the next year can be found on our homepage: [www.abtei-maria-frieden.de](http://www.abtei-maria-frieden.de).

Gods blessing, a contemplative advent, gracious Christmas and Gods blessing for the new year from M. Mechthild OSB and the convent.

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