

Gaudete - rejoice in the Lord, because he is near, soon the world will be saved!

The last church year - from Advent 2018 to Advent 2019 - is already over, and the days have passed quickly. The year seems to be short. It was so rich. "Rejoice in the Lord, because he is near!" Yes, HE was always there! We were often able to experience HIS proximity and HIS guidance.

We celebrated HIS closeness often and intensity in our beautiful church; during Advent, the morning mess, Rorate, with P. Matthäus Sandrock OSB from Münsterschwarzach Abbey twice a week. We are always amazed at the short and very concise introductions to the liturgy and his in-deep sermons on Sunday. Worship with candlelight on the 4th Sunday of Advent and the mood for Christmas with the group "Communis Cantare" on Christmas Eve at 2:00 were very well attended pre-Christmas services. Our church and the whole house were decorated with diligence, by Sr. M. Lumen Farre OSB and Sr. Christine Garcia OSB. Photos and videos are far from capturing these moods. You just have to be there and experience it.

The German retreat together with our Oblates at the beginning of the secular year, we have particularly strengthened ourselves for our spiritual life. Living in the presence of God allows experienced deep joy. We experience this very often and deeply.

M. Franziska Kloos OSB from St. Walburg Abbey in Eichstätt came to us immediately after her resignation at the beginning of the year. We were very happy about her time here with us. Some time after the election of the new abbess M. Hildegard Dubnick OSB, an American, she went back to Eichstätt to help prepare for the Abbess blessing. For our Filipino sisters she held the retreat from 03.-08. February. There were also Sr. Maria Regina OSB and Sr. Joseph-Marie OSB, who support the Benedictines in Mustair for a few years. It was a very happy reunion.

On March 3rd, Sr. Lumen Farre OSB celebrated her 90th birthday. Many Filipino friends, three Filipino Carmelites from Erlangen and numerous other guests came. A week later we celebrated in the community and with her relatives from Switzerland. 90 years and still so fit, so full of life! She planned her entire celebration down to the smallest detail on her own.

The weekend group "Gregorianik" under the direction of H. Fischer invited our community and many other interested people to Gregorian chants in our abbey church on Saturday evening, March 16; a deep experience!

Shortly before Easter, Sr. Christine OSB flew back to her home abbey after seven years of support as a cantor, guest sister and support in the wash house. We celebrated her with dances, songs, poems and words of thanks. We miss her very much.

From May 12-26, 2019, Sr. Patricia Wagenhöfer OSB from St. Walburg Abbey in Eichstätt was allowed to spend her vacation with us, so one place in the refectory and in the church was at least filled again.

On May 16, Fr. Isaak Maria Käfferlein OCist from the Heiligenkreuz Abbey celebrated his first Hl. Mass after his ordination with us. Many believers followed the invitation. We were very happy, we have known him and his family for many years. As a small boy he always came to our

family retreat with his parents and younger brother and later also to worship on Sunday. May he be a blessing for many people in the new foundation in Neuzelle.

In May we had a little May devotion every day after the compline. On May 1st, May 26th and May 30th we had specially designed May devotions with light processions, brass music or Klaus Schauer with the zither. One can experience that the Mother of God repeatedly brings people together for prayer.

We invited all employees and volunteers to the helper festival on June 23. We are very grateful for their diverse, selfless and committed work, which supports our community very much. Our laundry hall was festively decorated and experienced as a very inviting place. The grill masters, of course from the circle of employees (Thomas) and volunteers (Dieter and Klaus), grilled the steak, sausages and trout for us and even in high summer temperatures. H. Andreas Schwab, the manager of our farm, gave an interesting lecture on ecological agriculture in the seminar room of our pilgrim house.

At the festival of St. Benedict on July 11th, one of our Bamberg new ordained priests, H. Dominik Stehl, came to celebrate his first Holy Mass. Many believers received the blessing.

Two days later, on July 13th, we celebrated with H.H. Auxiliary Bishop Herwig Gössl and many, guests the 50th profess anniversary of Sr. Nieves Villareal OSB's. Also her relatives from the Philippines and Sr. Placid Dolores OSB from Paris came.

As soon as we had recovered a little, the next birthday party was due on July 21st: Our Sr. Milagros Espiritu OSB was 95 years old. There are hardly any congratulations of the same age, but surprise visitors like Ms. Adelmeier and Ms. Vogel from Traunstein and H. Hader from the nursing home in Heiligenstadt came. On the actual birthday, July 19th, our Mayor, Volker Dittrich, came and brought the greetings from our district administrator, too. Thus, Sr. Milagros was able to celebrate a whole triduum and thanked God with all her heart for so many years in his ministry. Until now she cleans still vegetables very accurately, as no one could imitate. Her cards made of dried flowers are worth mentioning - a true work of art and patience.

Drought should now become the keyword: it was very dry last year. We had to water much. It all started in the Holy Week when our guests watered the freshly planted lettuce plants of their own accord after compline. Our many flowers had to be watered, too. It was always "It was always touching" when you saw our Sr. Lumen - both legs amputated - in the e-Fix (wheelchair with electric motor) with the garden hose when she watered the roses in the park. On Monday, July 29th, she probably put too much effort into that. Shortly before Vespers, she hardly could breath, we got the doctor, who then referred her to the hospital with suspected pneumonia. There was water in her lungs. She couldn't store anything in her legs, which is why she was short of breath. Early Wednesday morning, July 31, she went home to her Lord and Creator. May she rest in His peace and enjoy the beautiful flowers from above. The Sunday before, she wanted to have photographed the sunflower with the bee, which were on the death picture. The bee's diligence suited her so well. We miss her very much right now in these days, especially for drying silverware, cleaning vegetables and decorating. Thank God she left all the boxes with Christmas baubles, little wax-Jesus, etc. well-ordered and labelled. By the way, she had already crafted lovely Christmas mail for the Philippines at that time; thus, Sr. Hildelita

OSB could take them with her on the flight home at the end of August; even the feastday and birthday cards for the rest of the year had already been lovingly stuck together and written, ready for signature. M. Mechthild OSB and the four young Filipino sisters received the death notice in Chieming. That day they left the office to visit the parents' house of our Foundress M. Edeltraud OSB in Chieming, our fellow sisters in the Frauenwörth abbey, and the brothers in St. Ottilien.

P. Placidus Berger OSB from Münsterschwarzach came to the funeral, because P. Matthäus was on vacation. The auxiliary priest P. Stefan, the last monk of Himmerod, was not here during the day as he went hiking with his large group. He is over eighty years old and full of joy, energy, and pastoral commitment. He was in Sudan shortly before to visit the people he supports from Himmerod. For the second time, already substituted our Father Matthäus. Good priests also exist. Let's talk more about them. Right now, when there is much talk of abuse in the Church. Yes, abuse is terrible and should not be, but there are also many, many other good priests. Let us pray for the priests and good religious vocations. We do this especially every Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. with a common rosary and every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. with Eucharistic adoration. All believers are invited.

At the end of August, Sr. Trinitas OSB said goodbye and flew back to her Filipino home after three years. Marie-Louise Schrüfer, our aspirant, accompanied her. Digitally, we immediately received the most beautiful holiday pictures from our communities in the Philippines. There was a lot of singing and dancing, everything was decorated, and Marie-Louise was allowed to live in the cloister herself. Maria-Louise came back full of enthusiasm for the Philippines. A good cornerstone for living in our community. Shortly before, she had completed her second state examination in religion and German as one of the best. On September 10th she entered our community and is now Postulant. We and many other people are very happy.

On October 7th M. Mechthild Thürmer OSB went to Maria Laach for the abbess meeting and took M. Hildegard OSB with her from Bamberg. Because of the school lessons, which she still gives, she drove back on Wednesday; thus, she could be present on Friday 3 p.m. at the departure of our dear Sr. Mary-Paul Andoy OSB. After a brain hemorrhage, she was artificially fed for almost two years, and lovingly cared for by the community, especially by Sr. Assumpta OSB. P. Placidus Berger OSB came to the funeral again, since she had served him reliably as a sacristan for many years when he was a priest with us.

Since we still need financial means to cover the costs for the church renovation, the general organ overhaul, and the song display, H. Sebastian Christoph Jacob, a solo guitarist from Berlin, made himself available for benefit concerts on May 31th and October 5th. Each time, he played for a good hour without a single sheet of music. Outstanding! Unique!

On November 11th we received an electric ringing bell for our Benedictine bell from the anniversary year 1980. Half of the costs were covered by a generous donation. Ringing the bell five times a day at the correct time is a problem for our aging sisters. That's how we thought of this relief.

Since Ms. Geuss had retired on March 1st and is available for a few hours only now we hired two new employees from Bamberg to help in the guest house. One of them is our Oblate Sr. Laura-

Anna. The daily washing and laying of the tables and other work was taken over by our Oblate Sr. Carola even more intensively. We are very grateful to her.

Last year we were able to feed and accommodate many, many guests, pilgrims, seminar participants, retreat participants, individual guests and parish councillors, the deans from Münsterschwarzach, the Paulus sisters from Nuremberg, fellow sisters located at the Jakobsberg and in Tabgha, church councillors and relatives from all over the world, bishops from the Philippines etc.

Organic meetings, herbal training and tours, holiday pass events, the writing room and "Fit durch Baby" (gymnastics for young mothers with babies) and much more other events could be held.

Sr. Bernadette Mayr OSB and her kitchen team have always cooked well for our community and the many guests. But she needs more help now. So we are looking for a housekeeper and hope that a suitable one will be found soon.

We hired Ms. Johanna Konrad-Brey for the library and H. Wiblishauser for agriculture.

Next to the library, the former sewing room was converted into an office with an adjoining room for the Biolandverband Augsburg for Northern Bavaria at the beginning of the year. On October 4th, it was inaugurated by our chaplain with the participation of numerous guests.

At the monastery markets in Bludenz, Walkenried, Plankstetten, and Memleben, at the farmers' market, the Kunigunden-, and at the Heinrich-Festival in Bamberg, we were able to sell our beautifully decorated candles from our wax workshop, candleholders, and cards using Japanese tear technique. This was only possible through the selfless work of our helpers and volunteers. A heartfelt "God reward you" to all of them.

Despite the dry summer, we were able to bring satisfied harvests to agriculture. Our vegetables grew wonderfully in autumn. Yesterday, Sauerkraut was made again, i.e. the cabbage was sliced and mashed. After several years we have grown potatoes again. However, it was very difficult to get them out of the ground.

Besides our two sisters, other people also died who were close to us. We would particularly like to mention our benefactors Ms. Evelyne Leicht, H. Roland Leicht, and H. Bönning. The news of the tragic departure of our Br. Pius, who drowned in the Trebgaster bathing lake on July 31st, we received only in late November.

At the end of this letter but not at the end of events, we would like to thank everyone for their prayer, their active and financial support, and for their benevolent charity. Also included, our thanks to family doctors with team, doctors and staff in the hospitals, the social centre in Hallstadt, and the support in housekeeping and care, Sylva Groh, and many others.

We wish and ask all readers a quiet, peaceful and happy Christmas season and God's protection and blessings, health and much joy for the coming year.

M. Mechthild Thürmer OSB with the convention