



IN MEMORY OF OUR

SISTER M. TETWIGIS SAILER, OSB

born 3.12.1915 - died 28.12.2005

*The Lord has made known His salvation;
has revealed His mercy before all peoples.*

As we sang this antiphon at Lauds on December 28, 2005, we did not know that our dear Sister Tetwigis was already enjoying the salvation of the Lord in eternity. She had died of an embolism of the lungs at 6:15 a.m. in the Hospital at Munich-Neuperlach.

Maria Theresia was born on December 3, 1915 as the sixth child of her deeply religious parents, Johann Baptist Sailer and Karolina, nee Kirchenmeier, at Gundelfingen in the District of Dillingen, Diocese of Augsburg. Two of her brothers had died at an early age, and two more brothers were born after her. Her father was a highly appreciated skilled specialist of the butcher trade and was in charge of the entire team of workers in a meat factory at Tannhausen.

After completion of the elementary school she enrolled in the middle school in nearby Ursberg where she was able to attend daily Holy Mass at the convent church. She was happy there, and as early as at age 14, she already thought of entering a convent. She asked the superior at Ursberg for advice. When he asked for her motives, she responded: "There is a way of life that leads me into the world, and this is dangerous. And there is another way of life that leads to the convent, and this one offers me the chance of finding God and attain to the goal of my life." (from her biography) She wrote: "Later came the idea of mission, because my eldest brother was already at the mission seminary at St. Ottilien (Fr. Ulrich who died in 1948 at the age of 36 at Tokwon/Korea, of typhoid fever).

The early death of her father was a heavy blow to the family. He died of a ruptured appendix at 57 years of age within one week and left 6 children of 4-20 years. "Our father died like a saint, saying his YES to the will of God", wrote Sr. Tetwigis.

His widow, 48 years old, courageously went her way on in faith and cared with great dedication for her children. She sent Maria Theresia to the mission school in Tutzing where she received her basic training for her later studies. Then she made her Abitur in Augsburg.

On April 25, 1939, Maria Theresia entered in Tutzing and started her novitiate on October 15, 1940, when she received the name Sr. Tetwigis. On April 26, 1941, she pronounced her temporary vows, behind closed doors, together with several other novices, at the Motherhouse of the St. Vincent Sisters in Munich. 1942 she began the study of medicine, under most difficult conditions during the wartime, and suffered especially of great hunger. In the midst of her studies, on October 26, 1944, again secretly, she could make her final profession in Kerschlach. Then she went back to Munich where she completed her doctoral dissertation with "Magna cum Laude" and in 1948, passed her state examination well. Thereafter she gained practical experience in our own hospital and still attended a course in tropical medicine in Hamburg.

Now she was ready for her assignment to the missions. On October 4, 1949 she was missioned to Peramiho/Tanzania. On her way to her mission she passed Rome where she attended a private audience of Pope Pius XII. who gave her a beautiful medal and his special blessing for her mission in Peramiho. From there she flew to her longed-for mission land.

It would make a long report to write about all the activities of Sr. Tetwigis. She worked untiringly, was very much involved in the construction and establishment of the hospital in Peramiho with 300 beds; she founded and directed the school of nursing and cared for the lepers. She worked 17 years in Peramiho and 6 more years in Lituhi. In between, as part of her further training, she specialized in surgery in Krumbach. But then, her health gave way; she suffered from heart and circulatory problems and had to have both hip joints replaced which had degenerated due to the long hours of standing during operations.

In 1976 she returned to Germany for good. She continued to work as medical doctor in Germany, in the clinic in Bernried and also in Mellersdorf. In 1980, Sr. Tetwigis came to Haus St. Benedikt, where she still treated patients. But then her health failed more and more.

As a conclusion, let us listen to Sr. Tetwigis herself. About these last years of her life, she wrote in her biography:

"For the rest, I want to deepen my spiritual life, because during about 48 years of my medical career, I had to be very active and had to neglect my spiritual life. Maybe the Lord will still grant me some quiet, peaceful years which should belong wholly to Him and which will lead me with great longing to my eternal goal."

*May it be so, dear Sister Tetwigis,
and may you now rest in the eternal Salvation of our God!*

Tutzing, December 28, 2005

Superior and Community of Haus St. Benedikt