

## A cheerful festival in our history

For a long time, the sisters had been invited to a very special event here in Kloster Annenthal: the inauguration of the exhibition about the history of our congregation. This exhibition had been completed by many sisters with the help of the consultant and archivist Mrs. Sabine Heise and the designer Mr. Stephan Kube.

The first guests arrived before the 24<sup>th</sup> August: on Thursday three sisters from England, on Friday five sisters from Rome: our Superior General, Sr. Mary Kristin, with three of her assistants (one from the USA, one from Brazil, and one from South Korea) and the secretary general. The German general assistant had already been here for a longer



time. On Saturday morning, some sisters arrived from the Netherlands, four sisters from the Sisters of Notre Dame in Namur (Belgium), and four sisters from the Sisters of Notre Dame from Amersfoort (the Netherlands). Further information about these two congregations can be found on this homepage under "history". A great number of sisters from our German province also followed this invitation. For a

"stand-up coffee", the sisters gathered in the cafeteria and in the inner courtyard. As usual on such occasions, the pleasure of seeing each other again was great and so the noise level was rather high.



At 10:30 am, the pontificate was celebrated with the bishop of Münster, Felix Genn, Abbot Laurentius from

Gerleve, and Dean Arntz from St. Lamberti, Coesfeld. During this festive mass, the Coesfeld "Sandwich Choir" sang sometimes alone and sometimes with the community. There was a booklet for everybody with the songs and texts of this Holy Mass. It



had a colorful picture by A. Felger on its front page ("An image of life. This is how we carry God's infinity within us, we are his image".) At the beginning of the Holy Mass, Bishop Genn expressed his joy about "finally being in Kloster Annenthal". He said, "In my heart lives the encounter with many of your sisters connected with



the great work that your congregation has been committed to for many years.“ The first reading (Deuteronomy 26,1-11) was read in two parts: First: “...take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket.“ Julie Billiart, our spiritual mother, let herself be guided by her faith in the good God even in times of illness, persecution, expulsion and slander. This faith is the first gift she leaves as a legacy in our hands. The first gifts transmitted to us by our two Coesfeld foundresses are the readiness to serve children and adults in need impelled by faith and without any conditions and to gain courage and strength by praying in front of the (Coesfeld) cross to be able to face any possible, difficult situation. After this interpretation the reading was continued. Referring to the gospel of the feast of St. Bartholomew, celebrated by the church on that day, Bishop Genn said in his homily, “The exhibit that you, dear Sisters, are opening today and that is to be a permanent one, shows: All this is the good that came into the world from the Nazarene. This is not about you pointing to yourselves, but about the fact that through all the pictures and texts one message shines brightly: Yes, all this good came from this Jesus of Nazareth. [...] What you place in front of our eyes as your heritage from Jesus the Nazarene is inserted into the city of our eternal life that is filled with the glory of God.“. After this homily and after special intercessions the Eucharist continued with festive songs. At the end there was a song “according to the words of Julie Billiart“: “Let us praise the Lord who does great things and who leads us into his land because God our Lord is good! God, our Lord, is good”.



Then Bishop Genn, Abbot Laurentius, and some sisters went to the exhibition for the blessing. Most of the sisters remained in the chapel where they had the opportunity of being blessed by Dean Arntz with the relic of the cross, which was very impressive with Dean Arntz addressing each sister by name. (The solution of the riddle: We were all wearing name tags).

At the blessing of the exhibition there was a short reading from the book of



Deuteronomy. There it says: “Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past.. [...]The Lord alone led Jacob“. These words also indicate to us the sense of such an exhibition. Thinking of the experiences of the past gives strength, courage, and confidence as well as a new perspective for today and for tomorrow. The exhibition is an essential part of a “spirituality center” and is the

outcome of an initiative of the General Chapter. It offers the sisters across the world the opportunity to get to know the spirituality of our Congregation more deeply in its founding place: Coesfeld. The sisters live in Europe, India, Indonesia, South Korea, the



Philippines, Papua New Guinea, the USA, Brazil, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and other countries. In the course of the following years, small groups of sisters will come to Coesfeld to participate in three-weeks' courses where they get to know the roots of the Congregation in an illustrative way and are instructed to be multipliers. In a specially designed room, the exhibition shows by means of documents the development of the Congregation starting from its foundation in Coesfeld in 1850 in the context of German history.



In her talk in the afternoon, Sister M. Kristin explained the significance of this exhibition: “Our Heritage Exhibit gives testimony to God’s work in our world through our sisters as they live the gift of our charism in ministry. It gives testimony to the goodness and provident care of God as we have lived out the paschal mystery through the times we have suffered the cross of exile, of war and of the challenges of ministering in areas of the world that suffer from poverty, and lack of resources. [...] Now, you [sisters in Germany] are the HEART of the Congregation welcoming sisters from all over the world, opening the door as Hilligonde and Elisabeth did 164 years ago. This indeed is a profound mission—to nurture the spiritual growth of our sisters the world over who journey here seeking to understand more about their call and their God experience by tracing the footsteps of our first sisters”.



After this address of our Superior General, all the guests enjoyed the great selection of cakes, having a good time in the big refectory, in the cafeteria, or in the inner



courtyard. Then, gradually, the sisters from the Netherlands, from Belgium, and from Germany said goodbye.

The event of this day can be summarized in a single sentence, a quote from the Bible (which, however, is completely torn from its context): Luke, 15,24b:

**“They celebrated a cheerful festival“.**

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