Notes from the European Province of Coesfeld



Sr. M. Paula Wessel, the Provincial Superior of the European Province, sends “Notes from the Province” to the sisters from time to time. This helps foster a sense of community among the sisters in the various European countries.

Here is an excerpt from her latest newsletter:

“For the cover photo this time, I’ve chosen our Roman branch. The picture shows our sisters’ rented house on the left and the Oblate Fathers’ house on the right. It’s a very large property, and I’m sure you’d all enjoy it: very old trees, cacti, and, in between, plenty of parrots that regularly put on “concerts” in their own way—ones you can’t help but hear. Our sisters feel very well cared for there, both in body and spirit. From July 28 to August 3, I had the privilege of being a guest with the sisters again. This time, it wasn’t the parrots that provided the welcome “concert,” but the cicadas. They were very persistent in their distinctive chirping, which was presumably a courtship call. With temperatures around 38 degrees Celsius, we spent almost all our time indoors. The sisters’ first prayer times begin as early as 7:00 a.m. (Lauds, followed by Mass at 7:30 a.m.). With such an early start, they are likely the first in our province to gather for prayer. As best they can, the sisters help out around the house: drying dishes, setting the tables, bringing meals to individual sisters at their tables, and leading the prayer in the chapel. Somehow, there’s always something to do. Sr. M. Aldegonda is still very active in this regard, and when she was in her home country of Brazil, Sr. M. Benedetta stepped in. In addition, several women from a domestic service agency are in the house, helping the sisters 24 hours a day with nursing care and general support. And the man of the house has been Salvatore for many years; he’s always busy with something, especially as a driver when errands or doctor’s appointments come up.

By the way: The cups in the community in Rome aren’t made of Meissen porcelain, but come from the Netherlands and bear the emblem of the Zusters van Onze-Lieve-Vrouw (Sisters of Notre Dame—a gift from Sr. M. Sylvia from Tegelen many years ago. “These are our best cups,” the sisters agreed.

The best neighbors are the Oblate Fathers, who enjoy celebrating Mass with the sisters in the morning, whether they’re already fluent in Italian or still in the learning phase. One of them is a student of Sr. M. Benedetta; she is certainly a good teacher for him.