

## Death Notice

**SISTER MARIA BERNARDIS** ND 4249

Maria VERHOOLEN

Maria Regina Province, Coesfeld, Germany

Date and Place of Birth:	March 04, 1930	Issum, Kr. Kleve
Date and Place of Profession:	August 12, 1953	Mülhausen
Date and Place of Death:	March 27, 2025	Mülhausen, Haus Salus
Date and Place of Funeral:	April 02, 2025	Mülhausen, Convent Cemetery



*„Blessed are those who dwell with you, Lord, who praise you always.“* Psalm 84: 5

We sang this song at a vespers service for the deceased when we received the news of Sister Maria Bernardis' death at the same time. It was a hymn from the many services Sr. M. Bernardis had put together for our community, and it reflects the spirituality, vitality and faith that characterized her life. Sr. M. Bernardis felt that this joy in praising God from the experience of his goodness and providence in her life was a precious gift that had already been given to her in her parental home. There they made music, celebrated, wrote poetry, sang, painted and acted - also as a source of strength in difficult situations, such as the threats during the Hitler dictatorship and the Second World War, in which her homeland also became a theater of war.

Maria Verhoolen was one of the first students at the Liebfrauenschule Mülhausen, which was reopened in the fall of 1945 after being confiscated by the Nazis in 1940 and turned into a war hospital. Sr. M. Bernardis repeatedly and gratefully recalled this time of new beginnings and new learning opportunities. It was particularly formative for her to witness how the sisters in the school and boarding school made every effort to impart well-founded life perspectives to the young people. For Sr. M. Bernardis, it was a special gift that her great talents in the areas of music, art and language were encouraged. The experience of leaving behind the mental confusion of the Nazi regime together with the sisters and surviving the great economic hardship of the post-war period was certainly an important reason why Maria joined our religious community after graduating from high school. She had experienced that God comes to meet those who embark on the path of seeking God.

After training in church music - especially organ - and studying German, French and philosophy for grammar schools, Sr. M. Bernardis began teaching at St. Lioba School in Bad Nauheim in 1967. She was a passionate teacher who was committed to a comprehensive education for her students and organized leisure and vacation activities beyond the classroom. With the support of the school pastor, she planned study trips to Israel and was able to inspire these travel groups in the Holy Land with the message of Christ. It was probably here that her longing to penetrate to the roots of our faith grew, for which she later also learned the Hebrew language.

When the community in Bad Nauheim was closed in 1994, Sr. M. Bernardis came to the provincial house in Mülhausen and taught at the Liebfrauenschule for a few more years. She continued to be creative, e.g. she opened a "One World Shop" on the convent grounds, where she offered fair trade products. She followed the request of some singers from Oedt to found a singing group with them, which rehearsed regularly in the convent and performed at church services and family celebrations. She was primarily responsible for organizing the liturgy in the provincial house community and the school community. She provided ideas for the many large celebrations and festivities at provincial gatherings and was involved in designing the program, much to everyone's delight.

"The cause of Jesus needs enthusiasts" - Sr. M. Bernardis sang this song; her enthusiasm aroused enthusiasm. She was a gift from God for our religious community and for the many people to whom she was a classmate, co-sister, colleague, companion and friend.

In the last years of her life, her mental and physical strength diminished more and more, and one could feel how she had come to rest inwardly in her great frailty. On March 27, she arrived at the "fountains of salvation": *Blessed are those who dwell with you, Lord, who praise you always.*