

**Bishop Johann Michael Sailer** (1751- 1832) was the son of a poor shoemaker and his wife. He became professor of theology and Bishop of Ratisbon (Regensburg). He entered the Society of Jesus in 1770. With the suppression of the Society in 1773, Sailer continued his studies in Ingolstadt. His erudition and winning personality endeared him to Protestants and Catholics alike. Because he tried to find good points in the Enlightenment, many spoke against him and denied him teaching positions. However in 1819, the Bavarian government through his former student, King Ludwig I, nominated him as Bishop of Augsburg, but the nomination was rejected by Rome. In 1821, “after he had sufficiently justified himself, he was appointed cathedral canon of Ratisbon,” and in 1829, he became Bishop of Ratisbon. “A perfectly correct judgment of Sailer has been expressed by Goyau in *Allemagne religieuse* (Paris 1905): “With Sailer German piety, both Protestant and Catholic, learned again to pray...”<sup>1</sup> The prayer book written by Sailer was distributed throughout Bavaria.

**Bishop Michael Wittmann** (January 23, 1760 – March 8, 1833) wrote a recommendation for his friend and mentor, Johann Michael Sailer, to become bishop of Ratisbon. (Regensburg) His respect for this theologian and biblical scholar led to his own desire to become a priest. He was the pastor of the parish in which Caroline Gerhardinger (Mother Theresa) was raised. In 1809, her cloister-school, founded by the Canonesses of St. Augustine, was closed by the state. This school had been founded by five nuns from Eichstaett in 1732. Bishop Wittmann saw young Caroline’s potential as an educator and foundress. He was her mentor until his death in 1833, the same year the School Sisters of Notre Dame were founded.

**Father Francis Sebastian Job** (January 20, 1767 - February 13, 1834) was ordained a priest in 1791 at Regensburg. From 1792-1808 he was a Professor of Philosophy and Theology at the Lyceum in Regensburg. He was the Confessor (1802 – 1834) of Princess Caroline of Bavaria, who was at first wife of the Crownprince of Wuerttemberg and later empress of Austria. He saw in Caroline Gerhardinger (Mother Theresa) the rare combination of Mary and Martha, calling her our “Theresian Caroline,” knowing her love for the foundress of the Carmelites. His writing of the *Spirit of the Constitution of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame* formed the basis of the Holy Rule. Bishop Wittmann had been his mentor and spiritual director. Father Job died in the arms of his Jesuit Confessor six months after completing the *Spirit of the Constitutions*.

**Father Mathias Siegert** (August 9, 1804 – May 28, 1879) was trained by Bishop Wittmann. He was asked by Bishop Wittmann to give religious instructions in the girl’s school in Stadtamhof where young Caroline (Mother Theresa) was beginning her teaching career. Fr. Siegert wanted to enter the Jesuits and was told by Bishop Wittmann to wait for a manifestation from God. On his deathbed, Bishop Wittmann said to Siegert, “Stay with these religious,” and he took this as his long-awaited sign from God. Providence brought Fr. Job and Fr. Siegert together when Caroline arranged for

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<sup>1</sup> J. F. Groner, “Johann Michael Sailer,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, p.851-852 (Catholic University of America: Washington, D.C., 1967)

Job's lodging at Fr. Siegert's residence. Job on hearing that Siegert was a strict ascetic, asked Caroline to find other lodgings for him. However, the letter did not arrive in time and he was conducted to Fr. Siegert's residence where they became lifelong friends. Job once wrote to Siegert, "You, my friend, shall be the leader, confessor, and helper to the religious teachers (at Neunburg) for such is the will of God....I am quite well, but still there is always something wanting: your friendly countenance, your kitchen, your beer cellar, and your pious example."<sup>2</sup>

**Margaret of Cortona, SSND** (Anna Wiedemann) the first successor of Mother Theresa entered Neunberg in 1837. At that time the townspeople were spreading rumors about the terrible living conditions of the young community. While Mother Theresa was away on business, young Anna composed a letter to a Bavarian official highlighting the beauty of their lives together. This tribute to Mother Theresa is in the Munich Archives. It later appeared in the local newspaper and the rumors ended. Later Margaret was superior in Regensburg. In 1858, Mother Theresa sent her and a companion to Rome. Two years had passed without any word on the proceedings regarding the Rule. On arriving they were told that Cardinal Reisach was not friendly to the Order and without his advice, the Holy Father would do nothing. They were encouraged to meet with Cardinal Reisach who received them warmly, but voiced his opposition to the Rule. On June 21, Margaret presented the Holy Father with an SSND Directory which showed 120 houses and 600 sisters as well as a simple petition. On June 5, 1859 (Feast of St. Boniface) the Rule was approved by the cardinals for six years. And the chief consultor had been Cardinal Reisach.

NB. A detailed outline of the Rule had been signed by nine bishops and two cardinals who wrote of their approval of the work and lifestyle of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame. These were shared with the Sacred Congregation in Rome.

(More available on *Sturdy Roots, Vol. 1, Family Tree, Woman of the Word, and Case Study in Courage.*)

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<sup>2</sup> Rev. Frederick Friess, *Mother Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger*, trans. from German (Baltimore: St. Mary's Industrial School Press, 1907) p.60-62.