

1095: *To Archbishop Carl August von Reisach*
Munich

Munich
January 15, 1852

J! M!

Your Excellency! Most Reverend Archbishop!

After prayer and repeated consultation with my companion sisters regarding the situation in Württemberg, I respectfully submit the following to Your Excellency:

1. No sister recognizes Sister Rosa [Franz] as suitable for the office of superior, except Rosa herself who is striving for this office.

2. As far as the ban on interference in the internal discipline, in the running of the household, and in the education of the children in Rottenburg is concerned, I can honestly state that, apart from the initial arrangement of the house after we moved there, the presentation of my views on the building of the convent after I was asked for them, and the assignment of the German classes in consideration of M. Rosa, which was also described as necessary, I have done nothing up to now that is contrary to the ban. I could not have done anything either because I still have not made visitation at the house in Rottenburg.

Every future provincial house will have its own property, but independence from the original motherhouse cannot be allowed without the young order, still in its initial development, being led to its own dissolution. The order can never give up its sisters either, but must reserve the right to send them and to recall them at any time.

As superior, I have always considered it my duty to give advice to the personnel under my charge when they ask for it, because the order and its members are still young and need further direction. Later, when they are stronger and everything is in better order, this will not be as necessary as it is now. Nevertheless, whenever I have to do this, I always hold to our holy rule.

Moreover, the house in Rottenburg is only a mission, and as I said from the very beginning, the current superior¹ is only temporary. Since the situation there is completely new and the beginning is difficult, as it is everywhere else, I did not

consider it wrong to come to the help of the sisters by giving them advice. At the beginning, I also had to help by giving them money so that they would have some means of support.

Furthermore, the lack of space in the house at Rottenburg and the inability to divide it into separate areas for essential religious purposes, as well as the lack of a secure and adequate income, make it impossible to establish a provincial house in Rottenburg without obviously endangering unity. (These things are prescribed by the old holy rule and demanded by the structure of our order. We make these remarks after mutual consultation.) This is especially true now, before the approbation of the new rule and constitutions by the Holy See.

3. Can I find a capable superior for Rottenburg without inflicting a new wound on one of our houses in Bavaria? My companion sisters openly stated that, if Rottenburg would be independent from our motherhouse, not one of them could agree to go there under the condition of having to tell the appointed confessor and inspector² everything about the house in Rottenburg and obeying him, because she would be acting contrary to her holy vows.

In the 19 years of our existence, it has been the practice that, no matter where the sisters were called or where they settled, they were subject to the respective bishops, confessed their sins to the confessors appointed by the bishops, and obeyed the school inspectors in accordance with the laws of the land. The local superior, however, governed the internal affairs of the house according to holy rule, which every future provincial superior will also do.

My companion sisters also said that, even if this structure for a future provincial house would not do harm to Rottenburg, it would bring about the eventual destruction of the other houses that may arise in Württemberg because everything in these houses would proceed just as in the provincial house in Rottenburg.

Many years of experience have taught us that, without exception, those houses where the priest knows everything and arranges everything are also the least religious. He is not entitled to this, and it causes all sorts of factions and dissension among the sisters. You yourself gave me emphatic warnings about this many times. At the end of our retreat, you urgently recommended that the sisters “would always remain

true to their motherhouse and their superior, speak openly and in all sincerity with her, and turn to their spiritual mother in all their needs. This will preserve the beautiful bond of unity and visibly call down the blessing of heaven upon them.” Since then, the sisters have not only spoken frequently and joyfully these pastoral words that were written indelibly in their hearts, but also proved them by their actions.

Now Sister Radegundis [Bruder] must be removed immediately from Württemberg. Rosa is not fit to be the superior, and in conscience, I cannot appoint her as such. No other capable local superior is available. In order to prevent the severance of the bond of unity, therefore, I know of no other way to act before God and in conscience than to recall the sisters by virtue of the holy obedience that they vowed before me.

This will make it possible for another order to take our place in Rottenburg, which will be even easier now because the sisters went to Rottenburg only on a trial basis, and we have not yet made any agreement with the bishop.³ We would rather withdraw our sisters, because in order to comply with widespread wishes, we would be forced to fill the teaching position held by Sister Willibalda [Deischer] with a novice.

With the help of God, I wanted to mediate the situation as much as possible through my intended trip to Rottenburg, but this journey did not materialize, and now it is no longer necessary.

Before God and according to my conscience, I cannot respond to your points in any other way. Therefore, I confidently entrust the entire painful situation into the hands of God whose cause it is. I only want to fulfill my duty. At the same time, however, I live with the consoling hope that you will be convinced of my openness, sincerity, and good will, and therefore you will not withdraw your pastoral care and favor from us.

Respectfully yours,

Theresa of Jesus

Superior of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame

Signatures of the Sisters Who Were Consulted:

M. Petra Foreria [Schiesser], Vicar

M. Margaretha [Käss], Director of Novices

M. Apollonia [Brönnner], Director of Candidates
M. Francis Borgia [Borst], Director of the Institute
M. Ludovica [Pfahler], Director of the Household

Letters of Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, translation and notes by
Mary Ann Kuttner, SSND, vol. 3, *Jolted and Joggled, 1849-1852* (Elm Grove,
Wisconsin, 2009), 86-89.

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1. Sister M. Radegundis Bruder
 2. Dr. Joseph Mast, Seminary Regent in Rottenburg
 3. Joseph von Lipp, Bishop of Rottenburg (1848-69)