

1364: *To Dr. Bernard Schels*
Rome

April 8, 1853

J! M!

Very Reverend and Learned Doctor!

We hasten to tell you about the apostolic nuncio's response to our last petition¹ so that you can take the proper steps *immediately*.

We got the very answer that we expected. This morning the apostolic nuncio told our confessor [Matthias Siegert] that he had spoken with the archbishop and the vicar-general² about the profession of vows, but received the reply that he (the archbishop) could not allow the profession of vows because there is no rule according to which vows could be professed. The old *Notre Dame Rule* is not suitable for us and the new one is with the Holy See. The archbishop had also inquired in Rome about the procedures governing such matters.

The apostolic nuncio advised us to do what we intended to do from the beginning, that is, to tell the Holy See that the archbishop refused to grant our petition for the profession of vows and did not respond to our repeated requests in this regard, and that mediation through the apostolic nuncio was to no avail.

Therefore, on the advice of the apostolic nuncio, we will apply to the Holy Father for permission to continue what we have been doing up to now until the Holy Apostolic See makes a decision or until we receive directives from the Holy See. If this does not happen soon, the entire religious institute is headed toward dissolution. In any case, we must apply for this permission for our *novices from other countries because, unless specific directives are given to the archbishop, he will place the former obstacles in our way*.

Therefore, we urgently ask that you submit our petition to the Holy See immediately so that it will arrive in time. This appears to be even more necessary because the archbishop *also turned to Rome, and God alone knows what he said*.

Fr. [Matthias] Siegert asked the apostolic nuncio why no one had placed an obstacle in our way for 20 years and why this is happening precisely now.

Answer: The question of our rule is under discussion with

the Holy See at this time.

Fr. Siegert replied that almost a year has passed since we turned to the Holy See and there still has not been any response. Another year could easily go by, but if we may not continue as formerly, the religious institute will dissolve by then.

Answer: The Holy See had to gather information from the bishops, which was very advantageous even if it also meant delaying the cause. We should have patience. The saints also had to wait.

Then Fr. Siegert took his leave without mentioning the candidates and novices from other countries because it would have been to no avail.

In the course of the conversation, the apostolic nuncio also said that he had suggested to the archbishop that he could allow the profession of vows for the length of time it takes before the Holy See confirms the rule and makes a decision, but it was in vain. According to an earlier statement, the archbishop himself will oppose the Holy See, which is further evidence that he will do everything possible—if not directly, then indirectly—to suppress or dissolve our religious institute.

May God be merciful to us if the archbishop is in any way involved in negotiations regarding our rule! He and the bishop of Rottenburg³ will surely set aside our outline and put into the best possible light their plan with their concepts of enclosure and especially of the director. You must be prepared if the Sacred Congregation again raises doubts or pronounces judgment on us because of this.

We think that, by assigning sisters under temporary vows to those places where it is impossible to connect the school and church with the convent, our entire outline is so practical that little will have to be changed. Then, in direct contrast to our archbishop's earlier statements vehemently demonstrating the impossibility of enclosure, he (and Rottenburg's bishop as well) will no longer have anything to say against this point.

Judging from the fact that the two points regarding enclosure and the director are always held up in the most spiteful manner, they will be torn to pieces, above all by the archbishop.

Just now we received a response from the archiepiscopal ordinariate to our repeated request for the profession of vows.

A copy of this letter is enclosed.⁴ We had not considered it by any means as an “absolute refusal,” but had clearly stated instead that approbation could take years, and our religious institute could dissolve in the meantime. Therefore, it seems that the apostolic nuncio’s discussion made it somewhat milder.

Now we must tell you about a dream our good Sister Petra [Foreria Schiesser] had. She saw the archbishop in the form of a wolf lying before the altar of the convent church in Amberg and constantly rising up against us. To the right of the altar, Mary was standing with her Divine Child, using her Son’s cross to strike the wolf until it could no longer get up.

Please pray for us as we will always pray for you with gratitude!

Fr. Siegert and our entire house send most cordial greetings in the Lord!

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

P.S. In case you did not receive our last letter, I will close by repeating that, if the candidates and novices from other countries must return to their dioceses, unity is endangered and separation is fixed and definite, just as it was in Rottenburg. We have no houses in many of these dioceses, and we would have to dismiss the most capable people, even if they have used almost all their means to prepare for our vocation.

[No Signature]

Letters of Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, translation and notes by Mary Ann Kuttner, SSND, vol. 4, *Vigorous Growth, 1853-1858* (Elm Grove, Wisconsin, 2009), 32-35.

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1. Carlo Sacconi (1808-89), Apostolic Nuncio to Germany (1851-53)
 2. Carl August von Reisach, Archbishop of Munich and Freising (1846-56) and Dr. Frederick Windischmann
 3. Joseph von Lipp (1795-1869), Bishop of Rottenburg (1848-69)
 4. A copy of this letter was not included in the beatification collection.