

4262: *To Mother M. Caroline Friess*
Milwaukee

Motherhouse
Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross
May 3, 1868

J! M!

Dear Venerable Sister Caroline!

Before me is a letter from Milwaukee dated October 1867 in which you assured me that Holy Mass and Communion were offered for me on the feast of St. Teresa and on June 20,¹ and that even the bishop offered the Holy Sacrifice for me.² This assurance was a consolation for me because we are always very much in need of prayer. Please thank all the sisters, as well as the bishop, for this remembrance in prayer and ask them to pray that God will grant me a happy death.

We are not forgetting America in our prayers either and we pray in particular for you during our hours of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed.³ You are not forgotten either, dear Sister Caroline, for we know well that you are most in need of God's grace and help. Be assured that we understand your difficult position and that we recognize not only what you have already done for our order but also how many troubles, sufferings, dangers, and sacrifices you have undergone.

We never believed that you acted out of anything other than genuine sincerity, but, dear Sister Caroline, you should have listened to our heartfelt and well-meant warnings and acted according to our directives. You would have saved yourself many sufferings now threatening to befall you. We do not want to reproach you. We thank God instead for sending a ray of grace into your heart and giving you a more proper way of looking at things. Follow this light faithfully because there is still time! Be convinced of the truth that all of our works will come to naught if they are not directed by God's most holy will as set down by the Church in the holy rule.

Fr. [George] Ruland⁴ wrote to us about the points that were unacceptable. A copy of our response is enclosed and we ask that you hold to it, dear Sister Caroline. Then, everything will gradually be on the right track again and all will be forgiven. You must also yield; otherwise your successor's

position will be too difficult. God will hold us accountable for future transgressions against holy rule.

As soon as the new edition of the holy rule comes off the press,⁵ we will send you a copy for each house. Our greatest concern is to send you a few European sisters who can help you, but not every sister can meet this need—and God took away from us those whom we considered suitable. If only you had sent us a few older sisters when we asked for them! Then our intent would be fulfilled now. Formed in the spirit of our constitutions, these sisters could have returned to America to continue working with one mind and heart and help you carry the burden. It must still happen, however, because Rome wants at least *one* American sister in the generalate to represent the concerns of America.

America can only be given *thorough* help if the director of novices, the director of candidates, and the school prefect are initiated into their duties here and then continue working in the same spirit in America.

Please stop accepting new missions so that the order can gather more interior strength! I know from experience how it wrings one's heart to be unable to satisfy the urgent petitions of religious and secular authorities and to have to refuse them. I also know that only your zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of the children's immortal souls made you act as you did. Holy rule calls this kind of zeal *immature*, however, and I must repeat: What good are all our works if we do not work as God wills? Last week we were asked to open six new houses with the stipulation that we also instruct the little boys in first grade. We refused all six houses because the Holy See does not allow us to teach boys.

Your acceptance of so many houses in such a short a time will have sad consequences.⁶ Teachers will no longer be properly prepared because they are needed immediately and there is no more time. What are the effects of partially trained teachers in the field of education? Due to the strain, many sisters will wear themselves out and the vacancies will need to be filled, but because the available personnel have been sent to new missions, no one is available. This is very difficult and, according to your letter, you are beginning to feel the consequences because so much serious illness is rampant.

The death of Sister Alexandra affected us deeply.⁷ We did not expect that another of the older sisters would follow our good Sister Magdalena [Steiner]⁸ so soon. Thank you for the newspaper article about the deceased. We told our sisters about these deaths so that the departed will receive prayers, Holy Masses, Communions, and rosaries. We are also sending you a list of our deceased sisters. May God be merciful and spare us!

We honor your devout intention to transfer the bodies of Sisters Magdalena and Alexandra, but good as it is, it is not feasible. Moreover, it is a worldly practice and some people would object if it were done by religious. Since such a transfer would also be very expensive, it would be taken amiss. If the orphans in Elm Grove⁹ would say the rosary daily for *all* the deceased sisters, these sisters will also be included. When you go to Baltimore, you may visit the graves of the deceased sisters *once*.

This year we missed the names of so many sisters who were listed in the directory under America last year and have not been reported as deceased. What happened to them?

Farming is by no means incompatible with enclosure. If the sisters' land is not separated from the neighboring fields by a wall or a fence, the dividing line must be clearly indicated so that the sisters know how far they may go. They should always be in sight of the convent. The sisters may *not* wear the candidates' dress when working in the fields.

As was already explained in our earlier directives and as called for by holy rule, you must always send a *complete* report on the physical, spiritual, educational, and religious formation of each sister preparing for reception and profession. Otherwise, we cannot pronounce judgment on these people. The directors of candidates and novices should always discuss these points with you when they write their character descriptions.

We are very grateful for all your communications about the older sisters,¹⁰ and every time we hear something new, it does us good. However, you told us that Sister Seraphine [von Pronath] still has those heavy nosebleeds and you had to call her from Hokah [Minnesota] to the motherhouse. If she is *improving*, could you not keep her there so that she could give you immediate help?

You also had to recall Sister Ildephonsa¹¹ from Baltimore very quickly because she gave such great scandal by her worldliness. We had heard about the splendid institute several times and we wrote to Sister Mary [Barbara Weinzierl] about it, but apparently Sister Ildephonsa had already gained the upper hand. God's special grace will be needed to save Sister Ildephonsa. If she is already gone, please scale down the institute because God does not want it from us. We do not like to accept institutes because we can scarcely satisfy the demands of parents and children without acting against our own conscience. The Ursuline Sisters and the Visitation Sisters are there for such higher institutes. We should limit ourselves to the elementary school—or boarding schools for the *middle class* at the most.

You are concerned that Sister Xaveria [Blomeier] is lonesome for America.¹² You are right because she has not been able to find what she wants here either. If only you had given us more information about her. God forbid that America has more sisters like her!

We have had a small room ready for the bishop¹³ for a long time, but he has not come yet. The bishop of Quincy¹⁴ stopped on his way from Rome. I do not think he left very satisfied because we had to tell him what is contained in the enclosed.

The vicar-general¹⁵ also wrote with great sadness that he has not heard from you for two years. He is well again now, thanks be to God, and has promised to visit us in spring. Linchen [Caroline] Friess¹⁶ is in our institute here; she is a good but physically weak child. She made her first confession at Easter this year. Marie [Friess]¹⁷ is in Neumarkt and will be coming here this fall. She wants to become a sister. Sister Alipia [Friess]¹⁸ is still in Neumarkt. She is a soul closely united to God and keeps the mission and its sisters together. Her health is wavering and she is now afflicted with arthritis. We have released her from school and, besides directing the house, she teaches French classes.

You probably know that Eichstätt has a new bishop, Leopold Baron von Leonrod,¹⁹ and that the Mary Ward Sisters²⁰ have established a central institute in Eichstätt.

The accounts and the bill of exchange arrived safely and we thank you for them. After the sisters in charge of such

matters check them more closely, any necessary remarks will be made.

Once again, dear Sister Caroline, use your time well. We do not know the mind of God who often lets the light of holy religion set in one continent so that it can rise in another. The future looks dismal in Europe.

The Holy See wants us to remain united, so please try to reconcile the differences. What a consolation it would be for me if, at our meeting at a general chapter which, with God's grace I still hope to see, some things would already be in harmony! Work vigorously for this!

The Catholic faith is applicable for all continents. Why should our holy rule not be equally applicable since it was dictated by the Holy Spirit through the Church? Teaching brothers should take care of the boys. Teacher-training schools should be established to provide well-prepared Catholic teachers.

Please try to send us a few sisters who want to become genuine religious!

Jesus bless you! Praised be Jesus Christ!

M. Th. of J.

Letters of Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, translation and notes by Mary Ann Kuttner, SSND, vol. 7, *Mission to North America, 1860-79* (Elm Grove, Wisconsin, 2008), 20-25.

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1. October 15, the feast of St. Teresa of Avila, and June 20, 1867, Mother Theresa's seventieth birthday
 2. John Martin Henni (1805-81), Bishop of Milwaukee (1843-75), Archbishop of Milwaukee (1875-81)
 3. Gregory Leonard von Scherr (1804-77), Archbishop of Munich and Freising (1856-77) granted permission to have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the adoration chapel of the motherhouse in Munich for 15 hours each day, beginning on Christmas Day, 1864.
 4. Fr. George Ruland (1817-85) was provincial of the American Redemptorists (1854-59) and rector at St. Joseph Church in Rochester, New York (1865-74). His correspondence with Mother Theresa has not been found.
 5. The rule that was given final approbation by the Holy See on August 26, 1865, was printed in Munich in 1868.
 6. By the time this letter was written in 1868, there were 65 missions in North America. One-half of these missions had been opened since 1863.
 7. Sister M. Alexandra Rückl died at the age of 45 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on March 26, 1868.
 8. Sister M. Magdalena Steiner died at the age of 57 in Baltimore on November 5, 1867.

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9. Guardian Angels Orphanage was opened in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, in 1859.
 10. The first sisters who came from Bavaria in 1847-49
 11. Sister M. Ildephonsa Wegman (1836-86) was director of the Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore from 1863 until 1868.
 12. Sister M. Xaveria Blomeier was a novice when she arrived in Baltimore with the second missionary group in March 1848. She professed her vows on August 15, 1849, and taught in various places in North America until she returned to Europe in 1867. In 1868, Sister Xaveria was sent to England, where she remained until 1879 when she returned to North America. She died in New York on April 16, 1883.
 13. Bishop Henni
 14. The diocese of Quincy in Illinois was established on July 29, 1853. On January 9, 1857, it was renamed the diocese of Alton and Henry Damien Juncker (1809-68) was appointed bishop of Alton, a position he held until his death on October 2, 1868.
 15. Msgr. John Michael Friess (1803-69) was the vicar-general of the diocese of Eichstätt (1851-69) and Mother Caroline's uncle.
 16. Caroline (Linchen) Friess (1860-1913) was the daughter of Mother Caroline's brother, George Andreas Friess. On October 19, 1867, Msgr. John Michael Friess wrote to Mother Caroline, "Last year your brother George's little Linchen came here for a visit. The child did not want to leave; we [Msgr. Friess and Adolphine, Mother Caroline's sister] kept her. She attended St. Walburga School [in Eichstätt] and took the first prize. Adolphine brought her to Sister Alipia during vacation. Then Rev. Mother [Theresa] came to Neumarkt and met the child. She was so well pleased with her that she took her to Munich and now Linchen is a boarder in the motherhouse. She is very good and industrious. The child has extraordinary talents and is a favorite of Reverend Mother! How wonderful is the good God! So Adolphine and I are again childless and the motherhouse has another Caroline Friess!" See Barbara Brumleve, SSND, ed., *Mother Mary Caroline Friess, SSND: Correspondence Addressed to Her from Various Persons* (School Sisters of Notre Dame: 1986) 49-55.
 17. Marie Friess (1853-1914) was Mother Caroline's cousin. According to her obituary, she was orphaned at age three and entrusted to the care of Msgr. John Michael Friess and his niece Adolphine Friess. After spending her vacations with Sister M. Alipia Friess in Neumarkt, she went to the motherhouse in Munich to continue her education.
 18. Sister M. Alipia (Walburga) Friess (1840-1900), Mother Caroline's youngest sister, made her first profession in 1862.
 19. Leopold Baron von Leonrod (1827-1905), Bishop of Eichstätt (1867-1905)
 20. Now known as the Congregation of Jesus