

MOTHER M. INNOCENTIA LOIBL (1900-1909)

Mother Innocentia was born into a family of farm owners in Lower Bavaria. Maria was the only daughter and had only one brother, a strong and self-willed young man. Since Maria was small, of slight build, and unable to help with the farm work, her devout mother entrusted her to the care of the sisters in Reisbach. On visitation, Mother Theresa discovered the frail child who far surpassed her schoolmates in intelligence and virtue but was intimidated by the overly strict training of an unreasonable superior. With her parents' consent, she took Maria with her to the motherhouse in Munich where she carefully watched over her development and education. Eventually, Maria decided to enter the congregation.

One day while Maria was a candidate, her brother appeared in the parlor to take her home. He had decided not to marry, and Maria was to keep house for him. He insisted with such determination and for so long that Maria wavered and considered going home. But Sister Margarita, the candidates' prefect, appeared in the parlor and spoke with the young man so firmly that he left since he never wanted to have anything to do with her again. Maria was happy about this solution and in the end, her brother decided to marry and raise a family after all.

At reception, Maria was given the name Innocentia. Mother Theresa recognized the great gifts of this young, timid sister and always tried to develop and strengthen her self-assurance. After her profession, Sister Innocentia taught in the motherhouse school for two years and then opened the mission in Dinkelsbühl in 1859. Four years later, she returned to the motherhouse to direct the large school there. In this position, Sister Innocentia experienced the difficult years of the *Kulturkampf*. Although the convent schools were not closed in Bavaria, the uncertainty of the situation (the School Sisters of Notre Dame had been declared Jesuit-related) and official harassment were a source of great strain for both the generalate and the directors of the religious schools.

In 1886 Sister Innocentia was entrusted with the formation and education of future School Sisters of Notre Dame. Although quite stern at times, she was a motherly prefect to the candidates.

On June 26, 1900, the general chapter elected Sister M. Innocentia Loibl to succeed Mother M. Josepha Hermanna as general superior.

Cries for a sweeping reform of the educational system, especially for girls so that they would have access to the university, resulted in various educational decrees at the beginning of the twentieth century. Expensive laboratories were needed to fulfill new curriculum requirements. An increasing number of girls applied for admission to the motherhouse schools and there was an alarming lack of space. The city refused to allow the congregation to purchase an adjacent plot of land for a new school. This state of affairs weighed heavily on the already anxious heart of the general superior. When

someone would mention the topic of the necessary measures, Mother Innocentia would shake her head and say, "That is for my successor to carry out." On July 28, 1909, God relieved her of her heavy burden.

Material taken from *The Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame: An International Educational Congregation with Bavarian Origins, 1833-1983*, by Maria Liobgid Ziegler, +June 18, 1983. Revised and completed by Maria Therese Barnikel, 1985.