

MOTHER M. MARGARITA OF CORTONA WIEDEMANN (1879-1894)

Mother Margarita was a highly educated, energetic and stately woman from Günzburg in Swabia. She entered the congregation in Neunburg vorm Wald, where she also professed her vows. The archives of the congregation contained a letter from the candidate who very energetically spoke up to the bishop in support of her superior when the latter had been heavily slandered by a priest in Schwarzhofen and the people in Neunburg.

In 1839, Sister Margarita opened the house in Amberg when she was 25 years of age. As its first superior, she directed the congregation's first secondary school for girls. When a mission was founded in Regensburg in 1854, Sister Margarita was placed in charge of the convent and school there.

Mother Theresa sent Sister Margarita to Rome in 1858 to help bring about a more rapid approbation of the congregation's rule, which had been presented several years earlier. She worked with such vigor that the rule was approved in 1859. Sister Margarita's long letters from the Eternal City, which unfortunately were destroyed in the motherhouse fire in 1944, told about very interesting experiences in Rome and discussions with leading Roman prelates. These letters gave evidence of her deep love for her religious congregation and of her great confidence and trust in her spiritual mother.

After her return from Rome, Sister Margarita remained in the motherhouse as superior and general assistant. She often represented Mother Theresa in important business transactions, especially during the 1870s when Mother Theresa's health declined. At times, Sister Margarita considered it her duty to reprimand sisters who failed against the rule, since she thought Mother Theresa was too kind and indulgent. Although this gave her the reputation of being too severe, she enjoyed the confidence of the sisters because of her sense of justice and prudence.

After Mother Theresa's death on May 9, 1879, Sister Margarita was unanimously elected as the second general superior of the School Sisters of Notre Dame during the general chapter held in October of the same year.

As general superior, Mother Margarita made every effort to preserve the unity of the congregation, to foster its spirit, and to further its educational work. The 50th anniversary of the foundation of the congregation was celebrated during Mother Margarita's term of office in 1883. To commemorate the occasion, the *Theresianum*, a home for poor and neglected children, was founded.

Mother Margarita died at the age of 79 on January 26, 1894.

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.

