

Dear Sisters,

You have already received the information, that May 31, was appointed for the celebration of the installation of our dear Venerable Mother Commissary General. In a spirit you surely took part in this feast and we believe to afford you pleasure, if we describe at least partly how we celebrated it in the Motherhouse.

In the early hours of the morning the holy sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated by several priests and the Most Reverend Archbishop [John Martin] Henni, and Holy Communion offered by all the Sisters, Candidates and boarders for the welfare of our dear Venerable Mother.

Towards nine o'clock the Sisters formed ranks in the arcade, which was decorated with wreaths and flowers. With the Lay-Professed Sister Mary Rosalie [Burkmeier] at the head carrying the cross and amidst the singing of the hymn of *Mary Perpetual Help*, the Sisters processed to the chapel followed by 16 priests and the most Reverend Archbishop. In the vestibule of the church, they received the Venerable Mother and the Assistants ¹⁹ and then entered the chapel which was elegantly decorated for this festival with natural white lilies and other flowers.

The pupils of the convent school --- even Protestants --- esteemed it a great honor to provide for the decoration of the chapel and had delivered their congratulations with music and song on the previous day.

Now began the Pontifical High Mass, celebrated by the newly elected Bishop of La Cross, [Kilian Flasch], assisted by the Most Reverend Archbishop on his throne. At the conclusion of very solemn *Te Deum* was sung. After the orations the choir intoned the *Ave Maris Stella*; then the Novices and Professed Sisters passed through the sanctuary, where the entire clergy joined them, into the enclosure of the upper oratory. The Archbishop and a few priests took their places in front of the altar, the rest of the clergy sideways; dear Venerable Mother had her seat in front of the communion railing.

Our Reverend Spiritual Father [P. M. Abbelen] then read the decree of His Holiness referring to the results of the election, and closed by requesting the Archbishop to bless the entrance of the Commissary General into her office. Thereupon, Venerable Mother with emotional, but distinctly clear voice, made the promise that she would ever strive to maintain the true spirit of the Congregation, and to the best of her power endeavor to contribute to the observance of Holy Rule, the keeping of the holy vows, the practice of the virtues of the religious life, for the glory of God and the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. ²⁰

After this the Most Reverend Archbishop ²¹ delivered an address concerning the proper significance of the feast, which does not consist in the acceptance of a new office, since Venerable Mother had already for many years administered this charge

with the greatest sacrifice, with firm confidence in God, with heroic love and fidelity. The object of the feast rather was really the closer union of the Congregation with the Church, because the election of a Commissary General by the Sisters was confirmed and ratified by the Holy Father, thus granting the government of the Congregation in America for the future a stability that would insure it against all human discretion. He praised the election of our dear Venerable Mother and expressed his conviction that if the Sisters at this moment were to choose again all would unanimously elect Venerable Mother M. Caroline. With visible emotion (for) the High Prelate of the Church declared his great recognition of the Sisters' work in America. He summoned all to persevere in this zeal by fidelity, faithful attachment, conscientious fulfillment of their obligation to sanctify themselves, and to assist others in securing their salvation, thus lightening the great responsibility of our Venerable Mother Commissary General. Then he imparted his blessing. Immediately after this Venerable Mother took her seat and all the Sisters rendered homage with tears of gratitude and joy, respectfully kissing her hand.

The prescribed orations were recited and the ceremonies closed with the archepiscopal blessing. Then all the clergy left the oratory and Venerable Mother addressed a few hearty words to the Sisters. After this she knelt before the altar and prayed aloud for all the Sisters, present and absent, since all, without exception enjoy the warmest love and sympathy of her generous heart. To all she imparted her maternal blessing. The dear departed, likewise were not forgotten but were thought of in fervent prayers. Thus the little oratory encompassed the most hearty remembrance of all the members of the Congregation: in the church militant, suffering and triumphant.

After dinner, when the older Sisters had sociably gathered about Venerable Mother, Mother M. Theophila [Bauer], who had received the notice too late, suddenly, to our great joy, appeared in our midst. Instantly she was on her knees before Venerable Mother, with the address: "Here I am with empty hands, but with a full heart." This childlike, hearty, humble speech brought tears to the eyes of all present. The Eastern Province was represented by her, a requisite for all of us.

In the afternoon the Candidates offered their congratulations in the presence of the esteemed guests, the bishops and the priests. Speeches were delivered in the English, Bohemian and French languages. Special applause was given to a simple but very ingenious German declamation on the passages from the Scriptures: "Who shall find a valiant woman? Far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her." Proverbs, 31:10 --- "She hath put out her hand to great things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." Proverbs 31:19, --- "Let her works praise her in the gates." Proverbs 31:31.

At 4:00 p.m. the clergy and all inmates of the house assembled in the exhibition hall to attend the congratulations and a little entertainment of the boarders. The older lady boarders rendered speeches in the English, German and French languages, The aspirants recited a poem DEO GRATIAS, in which they represented the joys, sufferings and the honor of our dear Venerable Commissary General in three wreaths of white, red and yellow roses all of which were intertwined by the "Deo Gratias." Then followed several cheerful music pieces and discourses.

As festival gift, the boarders had chosen our venerable Mother's favorite place, the cross in the convent garden, and on the eve planted the entire roundel with gorgeous red roses and blooming white lilies that perfumed the air round about with the sweetest fragrance. In the evening was the close of May devotions with procession in the garden, where our small grotto of Lourdes was festively illuminated. The Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary was sung during the procession. Having returned to the chapel, the Reverend Spiritual Father in front of the altar recited the act of consecration to the Queen of Heaven. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament closed this solemn, never-to-be-forgotten day, a day of genuine joy on account of the wise organization of the congregation by which it gained ecclesiastical authority in America through the Holy Father and at the same time remained united with the Generalate. This was the only correct manner and way to ground the Congregation as it had been designed by our Founders, Bishop Wittmann and Father Job, in its origin as a teaching and missionary Congregation; only union and submission grant and assure God's pleasure.

Let us, dear Sisters, persevere in fervent prayers that the blessing of the Divine Spouse, in strengthening body and soul, ever remain with her, who is now given to us by the highest Authority on earth as Mother, Teacher and Directress. May that same Lord be with all of us in true attachment to the Congregation, now favored anew by Holy Church until the angel of death ushers us into the eternal heavenly Motherhouse!

On May 31, the Church celebrates the feast of the holy virgin and foundress of a religious order, Angela de Merici. Seemingly by this coincidence Divine Providence has in Angela, conferred on us a new intercessor in heaven for the Congregation in America. For this reason, Venerable Mother Commissary General, in memory of this feast will send a picture of this saint to each Sister. Let us implore her often for her intercession!

-- M. Ernesta

[The following was added to the letter.]

The form of address for a letter to Reverend Mother would in the future be
Venerable Mother M. Caroline
General Commissary S.S. de N.D.

17. This letter, written by Sister Ernesta Funke, is included because of its content.

18. Seraphine von Pronath, Ernesta Funke, Gregoria Meyer and Aloysia Schmid. Probably only the first three were present; see Document # 146, which states that M. Aloysia Schmid was still in Philadelphia.

19. See Document # 143 for the words used by M. Caroline.