

Mother Theresa's Missionary Spirit

Mary Ann Kuttner, SSND

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When word spread about the Poor School Sisters in Bavaria, Mother Theresa began receiving letters and visits from bishops and priests, counts and countesses, laymen and lay women, even a king, asking for sisters to staff orphanages, schools, kindergartens, or homes for children in many different parts of the world. The essence of the call was usually the same, but each call was shaped by social factors that intensified the specific need, a political situation that either helped or hindered those who wanted to alleviate want, and the faith-filled vision of individuals who were not satisfied with leaving things the way they were. These men and women approached Mother Theresa, articulated the need, and asked for School Sisters to come to their locality, to speak their language, and to use their gifts in the service of the children and young people in their charge.

A large part of Mother Theresa's correspondence was in response to calls to establish and continue missions in places beyond the borders of Bavaria. There are more than 900 letters in this category and we see in these writings how M. Theresa responded to very diverse situations where the human element was often quite evident. If we go beneath the surface of 19th century expressions, we find M. Theresa's spirit of deep faith, confident hope, and ardent love in her response. At the same time, we also see many parallels to life situations today.

We see how M. Theresa's spirit must have inspired the sisters who would have never chosen to live in the poverty and difficult situations they found themselves in if it were not for Mother Theresa's leadership, the mutual support of their companion sisters, and the grace of God. M. Theresa had a great vision of what the world could be, but she knew that she could not bring it about alone. Others were attracted to the same vision and willing to do what needed to be done in order to make their small contribution to the realization of their shared vision.

We know about Mother Theresa's life of prayer that included hours spent alone with God each night. She herself writes very little about that. We learn about her life of prayer from others who knew her well and we learn about it from her response to real life situations, a response that could have only originated in her prayerful union with God. I hope to highlight the words and actions of Mother Theresa that speak so clearly because her life was so integrated and whole.

Looking at a list of missions founded in various countries, we can gain an insight into the breadth of Mother Theresa's missionary activity at a time when transportation and the means of communication were in no way comparable to those of the 21st century. Nor can we forget that during the same time, M. Theresa was also opening many new missions in Bavaria each year and working on the development of the rule until its final approval in 1865.

1847: America

We have several letters or long fragments of personal letters that M. Theresa wrote to Father Siegert, which give us an insight into her experience of responding to the call to America. The initial call seemed clear to Mother Theresa. We read in her letter to Archbishop Reisach in Munich that "*several bishops and missionaries came from America*

and pleaded for Poor School Sisters for the Christian teaching and training of girls who, to their great sorrow, are completely deprived of this benefit there. They believe that if Catholic Christianity is to fasten deeper roots in families, flourish, and endure, it is just as necessary to send them teaching sisters as it is to send them priests.

“During the past year, the General Superior of the Redemptorists from Belgium personally asked his Majesty, our king, for teaching sisters for St. Mary’s, Pennsylvania, in North America. His Majesty graciously received the request and immediately had the . . . respectfully undersigned state whether she could and would establish a mission there. She agreed to this for the reasons mentioned above and a promise was made. . . . The School Sisters have been preparing for this mission ever since. It was to have begun last autumn but then postponed until May of this year. (#701, April 8, 1847)

Mother Theresa and the first missionaries left Munich on June 18, 1847. After a long and difficult journey of six weeks, M. Theresa wrote to Father Siegert from New York in early August, *“If I could only speak with you for a single hour about the deep experiences God allowed me during this singular journey whereby I became acquainted with the world, people, countries, priests and laity. How very differently I think and talk about many things now, judge them, understand them, view them. . . .”*

Already in New York, Mother Theresa was advised to return to Europe immediately with her sisters because no one in America had called for them. She confided to Father Siegert, *“I deeply regret that we did not consult the Redemptorist Father Superior [in America] about our motherhouse but it is too late now. We should have had our archbishop write to the bishop in Pittsburgh and obtain documentary proof of acceptance.”* Nevertheless, she continued, *“God will arrange all things, however, and this does not disturb me in the least.”* (#724, August 3, 1847)

Despite the support and help M. Theresa received from (Rev.) John Neumann, who was the Redemptorist superior in America, she wrote to Father Siegert in early September, *“Oh, how my body and soul ache today! Each minute weighs heavily upon me but at least I could weep again today, especially in the church. . . . I feel I cannot endure this situation much longer. The business of our mission in America takes increasingly stranger turns. . . . As God wills, bitter as it is.”* (#734, September 2, 1847)

M. Theresa was waiting for permission from the archbishop in Baltimore to take over the schools in Baltimore, which the Redemptorists had offered her, and to purchase their former novitiate building at St. James. This permission was granted on September 4, and even though it was given rather reluctantly, it secured a foothold for M. Theresa and her sisters in the new country.

From then on, her letters express enthusiasm and hope for the development of the American mission. She wrote in December 1847, *“Our little convent is turning out quite well . . . you would be delighted and feel at home with us. May our loving God make us, and all the young women who will come after us, worthy religious! That would make up for all that we miss so painfully in this country. Our holy Catholic religion flourishes ever more beautifully and enjoys unencumbered growth in genuine freedom here. . . . If temporal needs are provided for, one can live religious life undisturbed.”* (#728, December 22, 1847)

1850: The Brede in Westphalia (Prussia)

Westphalia was a Prussian province and therefore beyond the borders of Bavaria. Count Hermann Werner von Bochholtz-Asseburg had purchased a former Augustinian convent known as the Brede, which had been secularized. This convent stood close to his castle on the Hinnenburg near the town of Brakel. He used the convent building for an orphanage and a free school for children of the area. Two teachers were in charge but the count wished to hand it over to a religious community to assure its continued existence in the future. In 1849, Poor School Sisters from Bavaria were asked to come and M. Theresa responded, *"We recognize the hand of God in this work. How could we delay?"* (#821, November 8, 1849) In her letter to the archbishop of Munich, she wrote, *"There are also plans to begin a boarding school because there is no such Catholic institute in the area. . . I have already examined the entire situation there and my soul was moved in every respect."* (#872, April 3, 1850)

The sisters arrived at the Brede in May 1850. The former teachers stayed on, however, until the Bavarian sisters could take the examination that would allow them to teach in Prussia. A certain amount of friction and conflict arose in the mix of two cultures with different approaches to conducting the orphanage and school. Superiors had to be changed often during the first years. Nevertheless, after a few months, M. Theresa thanked the pastor in Brakel for his words of support and told him, *"If our sisters' endeavors are blessed, all honor and glory goes to our loving God in whose hands we are only weak instruments."* (#977, March 20, 1851)

In 1860, the Brede Convent became a motherhouse. Several missions were established in the area until the 1870s when the *Kulturkampf* put an abrupt halt to the sisters' ministry there.

1850: Rottenburg in Württemberg

When Mother Theresa accepted this mission in the Kingdom of Württemberg, she wrote, *"How wonderful and admirable is God's holy providence! . . . Your letter is touching evidence of this truth. . . . Where the need is greatest, God's help is always nearest! Should we not willingly offer our hands to help where help is still possible?"* (#780, April 3, 1849) In September 1850, sisters were sent to open a private school in Rottenburg. Because of interference at the mission, however, it became necessary to withdraw the sisters in May 1852.

1851: Hirschau in Bohemia (Austria)

In December 1851, three sisters were sent to Hirschau in Bohemia, which belonged to the Austrian Empire at the time. It was very difficult for religious from another country to enter Austria and further complications forced M. Theresa to withdraw the sisters within 18 months. By August 1853, a new Notre Dame congregation was founded in Hirschau and the words of M. Theresa applied here as well, *"The Almighty will lead this cause from the crib; heaven and earth are under God's command."* (#780, April 3, 1849)

These two houses contributed to a very painful chapter in Mother Theresa's life – the struggle over the rule of the congregation. On the other hand, the two new

congregations that were founded there also accomplished much in extending the reign of God.

1851: Breslau (now Wroclaw in Poland)

In 1847 and 1848, famine and an epidemic of typhoid fever in Silesia left thousands of children orphans. Homes for these children were established and Archbishop Melchior von Diepenbrock searched for sisters to staff them. He had met M. Theresa years earlier when she was teaching in Stadtamhof and therefore he asked her for sisters to care for the orphans.

M. Theresa responded, *“After pondering the call deeply before God . . . I consider it most appropriate to send the sisters needed in Silesia. . . . As difficult as it is for us to send sisters now because the demand for our teaching personnel is very great, the condition of these poor orphans touches us deeply. The prospect of this large field of labor draws us like a magnet so that we can win the children for heaven . . . while teaching and training the poor orphans in the basic things they will need later in order to make an honest living as devout, Christian servants.”* (#907, July 2, 1850)

It was difficult for the archbishop to get the Prussian government to allow sisters from Bavaria, a foreign country, to come into the diocese. Eventually *Mater Dolorosa*, an already existing orphanage in Breslau, was offered to the sisters. Mother Theresa responded: *“It gives us great joy that the little mustard seed has been sown at the institute dedicated to Mater Dolorosa. With such a loving patron and guardian, we hope for great success. . . . We may not shy away from any sacrifice for the salvation of souls. . . . I must openly admit that our Blessed Mother has never abandoned my steadfast trust and therefore I left other places in Bavaria without teachers in order to bring sisters to Breslau under her protection.”* (#1019, July 9, 1851)

When arrangements were being made for their arrival, she wrote, *“We sincerely ask that you allow us to enter upon our work in Breslau quietly and in all humility like our dear Lord Jesus who will grant us the necessary grace.”* (#1044, September 16, 1851)

On October 15, 1851, five sisters came to Breslau in order to take over the “difficult work in the Silesian vineyard.” The house was very poor and the children showed signs of neglect. Three months later, Mother Theresa wrote to Diepenbrock who had been made a cardinal in the meantime, *“Truly, it is necessary for us to work together if this foundation is to succeed. . . . It seemed that most of the former staff cared little about the well-being of the flock because the exterior of the house was only a reflection of what the interior was like. Thanks be to God, the house has finally been cleaned up to some extent and I trust that with the furnishing of the chapel and the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, adoration and worship will begin and bring about a new epoch for the foundation – one that is rich in blessing.”* (#1080, December 19, 1851)

Mater Dolorosa was the beginning of a flourishing province in Silesia. Personnel from Bavaria had to take an additional examination in order to teach in Prussia. A professor from the university came to teach the candidates Polish. It was not long before young women from the area entered the congregation and the province grew rapidly during the next two decades. In the mid-1870s, however, the *Kulturkampf* forced all the sisters to leave the motherhouse and 31 missions and find a home in other countries.

What appeared to be a great tragedy, however, provided personnel for missions in other lands such as Austria and Hungary where the School Sisters were called.

1853: Freistadt in Austria

A merchant's widow and her daughter, Fanny, were advised by their bishop, who had been a good friend of Father Job, to ask M. Theresa for sisters to staff the kindergarten and needlework school that they wanted to found in Freistadt. In one of M. Theresa's earliest letters to Fanny, she wrote, *"You speak of cross and suffering. In the cross are salvation, consolation, and blessing. . . . I consider it a good sign if Jesus is using the cross to make known to us that it is God's work. Therefore, take heart! Trust in God; look to God who will bring about good results if we seek to honor God alone, if we follow Jesus. The work of God reveals the thoughts of many hearts."* (#862, March 14, 1850)

In 1853, candidates were sent to Freistadt on a provisional basis because the Austrian government would not approve a religious foundation that was dependent on a motherhouse in a foreign country. An agreement with the Holy See was finally signed in 1856 that allowed sisters to come, but then it took 20 years before a document of the foundation given by Mrs. Schwarz and her daughter was finally approved and signed by all responsible parties. This mission truly earned its claim to the words, *"All the works of God proceed slowly and in pain but then, their roots are the sturdier and their flowering the lovelier."* (#2277, October 4, 1856)

1856: Steißlingen in Baden

In the Grand Duchy of Baden, three noble families established schools on their property and provided for the sisters to teach the girls in their domains. Although the government approved the opening of the schools and the appointment of Poor School Sisters as teachers, it was with the added clause, "liable to recall at any time." The grand duchy was generally hostile to the Catholic Church and the archbishop had already been imprisoned once. M. Theresa wrote to the pastor in Steißlingen, *"Be assured that the Catholic cause in Baden is very close to our hearts precisely because it is so hard pressed on every side. . . . Much would be gained through the genuine Catholic education of the young people there and a wide field of labor would be open. As God wills! When the Lord calls, we will cry out with Samuel, 'Lord, here I am!'"* (#1856, February 8, 1855)

Teaching sisters had to be natives of Baden and after a few years, a novitiate was opened with five novices in Munzingen. The sisters were "liable to recall at any time," however, and in November 1872, the government ordered them to leave the schools and convents within four weeks. The School Sisters never returned to Baden.

1857: Gorizia in Austria (now in Italy)

The director of the Institute for Children with Hearing and Speaking Disabilities in Gorizia wrote and asked for sisters to care for the children and the household there. Mother Theresa responded, *"I was grieved to read and see how much tragedy there is in human affairs everywhere and in every respect and how many souls are therefore lost. Nevertheless, I was filled with joy because . . . we are now being shown a part of the vineyard and invited to come and prune and cultivate the vines so that with God's grace,*

they will bring forth fruit in due time. Therefore, I say with heartfelt joy, 'We will come!'"
(#2936, April 22, 1857)

Although Gorizia belonged to Austria at the time, the languages in the area were primarily Italian and Slovenian. In order to communicate with the children, the sisters also needed to learn sign language. None of the first sisters sent to Gorizia in 1857 were fluent in any of these languages, but in a little more than a year, Sister Louise was teaching the children. It was a very difficult mission – excessive demands were made on the personnel and the sisters lived in great deprivation. Nevertheless, they remained until 1884 when the institute was turned over to a different administration.

In 1860, however, Countess Matilde Coronini asked for sisters to staff a separate academy and boarding school for girls of the nobility in Gorizia. This was the beginning of the foundation in Gorizia that continues to this day.

1858: Temesvár in Hungary (now Timisoara in Romania)

In 1855, the bishop of Csanád asked Mother Theresa to send sisters to his diocese in southern Hungary. After the Turks finally left the devastated area in the 18th century, German farmers settled there, cultivated the land and made it fertile. There was little time for education, however, and there were no congregations of women religious in the entire diocese either. The bishop wanted to begin with a school for girls in the provincial capital, Temesvár, where peoples from many different places who spoke many different languages were living. In her letter of acceptance, Mother Theresa wrote, *"Once the beginning has been made, even if it is in the stable at Bethlehem, then God will continue to help us miraculously. This has happened wherever we have gone. . . . When the Lord blesses, a little bread is enough for many."* (#2527, December 29, 1857)

After a seven-day journey from Munich by train, stagecoach, and boat, the first sisters and candidates arrived in Temesvár on October 7, 1858. The next day, the bishop took them to the poor classrooms and living quarters and they immediately set to work. Six months later, however, Sister Ludmilla, the superior of the new mission, died suddenly at age 33. Mother Theresa wrote to the bishop, *"Dear Sister Ludmilla, kindhearted and so full of spirit and vitality, has left her post, has left all of us, so quickly. . . . I could not sleep the entire night on which she died and was called, as it were, from one sister to another who was seriously ill. So it was the good Ludmilla! What a loss for the new institute just getting started in Temesvár! What a loss for our entire congregation! . . . It was a consolation for me that I had this sister whom I could send to Temesvár. Although she was plain and simple in appearance, she not only knew how to teach the children well but also how to give them good character training. . . ."*

"God gave her to us and has now taken her away. Blessed be the name of God forever! . . . She is still a part of our community and will plead for us at the throne of God to send other good laborers into the vineyard that has so few when there is so much work to be done. . . ."

In the beginning, we counted on only two classes. The institute was to develop later and I made adequate provision for that but both schools grew so rapidly, doubling the work and making such great demands on the sisters' energy. It hurts me all the more, for

instead of expecting the sisters to take on such a burden, I seriously warned them against this. . . . At the beginning you might not have expected the large number of people that I sent (eight came instead of three) and it is still too few, even for Temesvár. More personnel are needed . . . it will be extremely difficult because God is visiting us this year with so much suffering of this kind. I do not know what God has in mind and therefore I cannot help as much as I would like to.” (# 2870, March 26, 1859)

Nevertheless, other candidates and sisters were soon found to make the long journey to Hungary. Although classes were conducted in German during the first years, the sisters were expected to learn Hungarian and eventually they were also required to teach in Hungarian. Approximately 72 sisters and 60 candidates were sent to Hungary from other parts of Europe until enough young women from the area entered the congregation and were able to staff the schools and missions that had been opened there during Mother Theresa's lifetime.

1858: Call to Africa

On July 6, 1858, M. Theresa reported to the Royal Government of Upper Bavaria: *“When there was question of bringing some African girls to Bavaria about three years ago in order to teach them Christianity, to win them for the reign of God, and to save their souls, the Poor School Sisters, like other convents here and abroad, were asked if they would accept some of these girls for the love of God. We accepted seven girls who came a short time later in the most pitiful condition through Father Oliviere, who had ransomed them at a slave market in Cairo in order to help them save their immortal souls.*

“The Court Chaplain Müller from Munich, who is benevolent and zealous for all things good, immediately provided what was needed for some of them, and the Religious Institute took the others at its own expense. The Religious Institute asked absolutely no one to take up a collection or to help provide their support in any way. We looked for godparents for their baptism and confirmation, as prescribed by the Church. Because people of every class, even members of the royalty, were involved in this work of charity and immediately took great interest in these African girls, the respectfully undersigned did not think this was wrong and, in truth, never intended to violate any law by this action.

“Their support will depend entirely upon the mercy of God as was the case up to now and will be even more in the future, because the outstanding missionary to Africa, Father Knoblecher, who began negotiations with us about an African mission of Poor School Sisters when he brought these girls to us, died recently. (#2650, July 6, 1858)

Father Ignatius Knoblecher was a missionary in what is now Sudan. He founded a school in Khartoum for the children of Europeans who settled there and for African boys who had been ransomed from slavery. The intent was to prepare these African boys to be missionaries in their own country. By 1856, some of them had been sent to Europe to study theology. There was no similar school for girls and it is possible that this was the topic of the “negotiations” mentioned in M. Theresa's report to the government.

Knoblecher died at the age of 39 in Naples on April 13, 1858. On October 24 of the same year, the congregation celebrated its 25th anniversary. A commemorative plaque was prepared which showed a School Sister of Notre Dame with three girls. One of these

girls is not European, showing how serious the sisters were about ministering to African girls at the time.

In November 1858, Court Chaplain Mueller, who distributed the funds for the Louis Mission Society, wrote to Bishop Henni in Milwaukee, "The sisters will also establish themselves on the upper Nile as soon as black girls have been properly trained. If they do not use natives, the mission could scarcely exist."

Between 1848 and 1863, approximately 100 missionaries were sent to Africa from various countries. Three-fourths of them died from malaria, tropical fever, and intestinal diseases. Statistics were similar for merchants and explorers in the region and it is most likely that our sisters would not have fared any better. They would have come too soon, but the seed was sown for the later mission to Africa.

1860: Vienna in Austria

Gabriele von Czillich, a noble benefactor of the sisters in Traunkirchen, Upper Austria, suggested that Poor School Sisters be called to staff an already-existing orphanage in a poor section of Vienna. In M. Theresa's reply to Countess Flora von Fries, the head of the charitable association in charge of the orphanage, she wrote, "*In accordance with your wish, we will begin our work in the Mater Misericordia Institute on October 15, 1860. We do this with all the greater joy, because there are so many bonds connecting us to the imperial city of Vienna. Our founder of blessed memory, Father Sebastian Job, lived and worked there for a long time as confessor for the Empress Mother Caroline.*" (#3101, August 30, 1860)

In addition to caring for the orphans, sisters taught a rapidly increasing number of children on all levels. In response to a new request, M. Theresa wrote to the same countess in 1864, "*The order accepts the fund of 10,000 florin collected by the Maria Elizabeth Society . . . for the establishment of a home for young women who work in factories.*" (#3766, December 7, 1864) Warned by Sister Margareta that acquiring and furnishing the house would demand huge sums of money and that the purchase could be made only with great trust in God's help, M. Theresa replied, "*We have this trust. It is the least of our worries,*" and the purchase was made. Empress Mother Caroline gave a considerable donation and saw to it that the congregation obtained corporation rights in Austria. M. Theresa continued in her letter to the countess, "*We trust that the project undertaken solely for the glory of God and the salvation of immortal souls will enjoy God's blessing and protection forever and ever!*" (#3766, December 7, 1864)

1864: London in England

The first sisters were called to England by Arthur Dillon-Purcell, an English priest who had studied in Munich and was assigned to St. Boniface parish for Catholic German immigrants in Whitechapel, an industrial suburb of London. (Near one of the subways that was bombed recently in London) Whenever M. Theresa heard of children who were poor and in need, she was ready to help immediately, but even more so when she heard that they were also neglected and living in a foreign country. Mother Theresa herself never went to England. She wanted to accompany the first six sisters and two candidates missioned there in October 1864 but became ill on the way and had to remain in Paris with her secretary while Father Siegert brought the sisters to London.

Countless factories surrounded the convent and the air was filled with soot, smoke, and impenetrable fog. In M. Theresa's own words written later, *"For five years the sisters lived at the expense of the Munich motherhouse in a rented building where they were without garden, fresh air, or exercise. Soon the sad consequences of these privations became evident, several sisters became ill, and one sister died."* (#5113, November 24, 1875)

The situation was alleviated somewhat after the first sisters passed the English teaching examination in 1867 and could earn a salary. Although they were teaching German immigrants, Mother Theresa expected her sisters to become fluent in English in order to become effective teachers. She always hoped that native English speakers who could become teachers would enter the congregation, but few came. The young women shunned the small convent in such a disreputable and unhealthy area of the city where the sisters lived in extreme poverty.

After eight years, the sisters were forced to leave their first mission but despite the hardship, M. Theresa wrote, *"If called again, they would be willing to return to Whitechapel."* (#5113) A few other missions in England were accepted during Mother Theresa's lifetime and eventually flourished.

1865: Pfaffenhofen in Tyrol (Austria)

The bishop of Brixen in Tyrol wanted School Sisters for his diocese. Three different places were proposed, but only one mission developed in Mother Theresa's lifetime. The first application came from Innsbruck but it soon became clear that a mission would never be founded there.

Then a priest offered to sell his property in Kronburg, a very isolated place high in the Alps, if the sisters would *"accept the debt on the property, maintain perpetual adoration, and take over a home for poor, neglected children."* (#2996, November 18, 1859) Although the bishop had reservations, he gave his permission, to which M. Theresa responded, *"While I share completely your views regarding the debt . . . and acknowledge that I did not see it any differently, . . . it was solely in consideration of perpetual adoration that I wanted to accept the offer if you would give your consent."* (#3020, January 15, 1860)

The day after the purchase agreement was signed, serious complications surfaced and it took four years to cancel the sale! In a letter to the bishop written in the midst of this difficulty, we read, *"The Poor School Sisters would be happy to go to the tiniest village in Tyrol if they are called and find a field of labor appropriate to their vocation – and we still hope to come to Pfaffenhofen."* (#3267, July 2, 1861) Property in Pfaffenhofen had been left to the School Sisters with the stipulation that they teach in the elementary school free of charge. Therefore, the sisters also needed to run a farm in order to support themselves. This mission was finally opened in 1865 and sisters are still ministering in Tyrol today.

1869: Call to Brazil

William Feldhaus, a Jesuit missionary in Sao Leopoldo in Brazil, wrote to his superior in Germany and asked that his letter be forwarded to the proper place because he did not know M. Theresa's address. He wanted School Sisters for "the German colonists in the Rio Grande do Sul Province. About half of the colonists were Protestant

and exercised a very strong influence on the Catholics who were neglected, especially the young people there.”

M. Theresa forwarded the request to M. Caroline, saying, *“We were advised not to send sisters there because every one of them would succumb to the southern climate. Besides, we do not have any sisters to send. Then we recalled that you, dear Sister Caroline, have native sisters from the southern part of America who are more accustomed to the climate and the customs.”* Father Feldhaus had mentioned in his letter that the sisters would not be able to wear the habit, among other things, because of the local customs. M. Theresa continued, *“We ask you to write to Father Feldhaus and tell him whether you can grant his request. . . . Brazil is a great empire and according to the prospects held out in this letter, if our sisters would find entrance and acceptance there, a great new field of labor would open up for us. Consider now before God what can be done and then tell us and Father Feldhaus.”* (#4313, February 3, 1869)

We do not know if or what M. Caroline wrote. Nevertheless, School Sisters of Notre Dame established a mission in Brazil under different circumstances in 1935 and the General Chapter will be held at Sao Leopoldo in 2007.

1873: Call to Australia

M. Theresa did not accept every request for sisters, which included one that came from Australia in 1873. By that time, the laws of the *Kulturkampf* were beginning to take effect in Prussia and the sisters were being expelled from the country. A pastor in Australia thought they could come and teach the children of German immigrants in his parish there.

M. Theresa wrote to M. Caroline, *“We are very grateful for the information that your latest letters gave us in regard to Australia . . . We gained a much different view than we had from the previous descriptions and we will not consider Australia if another application is made.”* (#4906, February 23, 1874) Up to now, no School Sisters have been missioned to Australia.

Closing

When all the sisters left Prussian Silesia during the *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s, the candidates crossed the border and went with them to Weißwasser in Austria where they were received and then sent on mission. Sister Ignatia Drewes was one of the sisters who were sent to Hungary. I would like to close by reading one of the few personal letters of M. Theresa that is still extant.

“Maria Ignatia!”

St. Ignatius and his brothers offered to go to the missions wherever the Holy Father would decide to send them. Following your patron’s example, you offered to go to the mission in Hungary, which demanded a great sacrifice. The dear Lord will never be outdone in generosity and will reward you if you continue to take the great St. Ignatius as your model, follow his example, and do everything out of love for God and for the greater honor and glory of God. There was a reason why you were given this passionate, loving saint as your patron at reception!

“Regarding your relationship with us, dear Sister, please be assured that you are written in our heart just as all those sisters whom we know – and that we are praying for you. Please do the same for us!

Jesus bless you! Praised be Jesus Christ!

Mary Theresa of Jesus (#5123, ca 1875)

NB. Letters of Mother Theresa used in this presentation were translated by S. Mary Ann Kuttner, SSND.