



Obituary

Sr. Judith Schneider

deceased 11.6.2020

Sr. Judith, Maria Schneider, was born 2. January 1928 in Kladrau, Sudetenland. She was the eldest girl of five brothers and sisters.

Her home area – part of the archdiocese of Prag – belonged to Czechoslovakia since the end of World War 1 in 1918. In 1939 – at the time of Hitler – it became part of Germany again. This was experienced as a “home coming” by the people. But eventually it turned out to be a tragedy. In 1945 the region was annexed to Czechoslovakia once more, and German citizens were deported systematically. Maria and her younger sister, however, left before that, and found their own way towards Western Germany. 1946 all their documents were stolen in Munich. Later on she had to affirm her date and place of birth in lieu of oath.

In 1947 her family lived in Schwarzheide north of Dresden. After elementary education Maria attended a commercial school in Pilsen. From 1947 to 1949 she worked in a sales department in Schwarzheide. Reports of that time state that she quickly “learnt the ropes of a new trade”, her extraordinary sense of duty, as well as perfect typewriting.

In March 1949 Maria entered our Congregation in Neuenbeken. She carried a report of her parish priest, in which he asked parishes, Caritas and other social institutions to help Miss Schneider in every possible way. The journey took eight days and had its own risks and dangers. Her sister, our Sr. Maria Ruth, reports that Maria was put into prison three times on the way, but somehow, she managed to become free again each time. The sisters in Neuenbeken were praying hard for the safe arrival of the new postulant from Eastern Germany.

On 1. April 1949, she arrived in Neuenbeken. As a candidate she attended the homecraft school until 1950. She was received into the novitiate 1.2.1951 and received the name “Judith”, in remembrance of the clever, courageous woman from the Old Testament. She made her first Profession 2.2.1952, and final vows 2.2.1955. After her first apostolates in Bad Kissingen, Knechtsteden and Neuenbeken, she travelled to the Motherhouse Heilig Blut in March 1959, and from there to Kifungilo in Tanzania. From 1961 to 1964 she was provincial procurator of our East African Province. After her home leave in 1965 she first helped in the Mission Procura, at that time in Heilig Blut. After the General Chapter in 1967 she became General Procurator – an office she held until 1978.

At the Chapter 1969 the sisters were granted two weeks “Convent holidays” a year. Sr. Judith went in search of a suitable place for a holiday house. At her initiative a small CPS house was built in Heimbach/Eifel - close to Maria Wald where our Founder had started his religious life. In the course of the years many sisters from the German Province, Heilig Blut and Mönchengladbach enjoyed a holiday there in beautiful countryside with a healthy change of air in the Eifel region. The sisters from Mönchengladbach took good care of the house.

In 1978 the Generalate missioned Sr. Judith to Tanzania with a special intention: A novitiate house was needed, since the border to Kenya was closed, and young ladies from Tanzania could no longer do their initial formation in Kenya. After orientation- and Kiswhili courses in Cologne Sr. Judith reached Tanzania in April 1979. After more language study in the country she started the new initiative. This meant intensive search for a suitable place and long consultations with the government. To bridge time, a temporary formation house was rented and lovingly prepared in Lushoto in the Usambara Mountains. Four candidates started there in 1980. The sisters of this first group invited Sr. Judith to Tanzania for their Silver Jubilee in 2009. They wrote, "It was Sr. Judith who found the place for our novitiate. She was our first working mistress and cooperated untiringly with Sr. Magna. She taught us in different ways how to live religious life. We are her first "product" and are proud of her."

In 1982 the government granted permission for building in Poli Singisi/Arusha. Sr. Judith now concentrated on her actual mission – the construction and establishment of the novitiate house. Of course, this meant hard work, as the chronicle of the East African Province reports in detail. Somehow, the story reminds us of Abbot Francis and his competent founding of mission stations. Apart from responsibility for the actual building process, it meant measuring the land, reserving the plot, exploring the neighborhood, building a road and a bridge, providing water, starting fields and gardens, and later on stables. Later - after the first four novices had moved to Poli Singisi - some of the make shift buildings from Lushoto were transferred to Poli. Visitors are always amazed at the extent of the project – initiated and completed by Sr. Judith.

She herself returned to Germany in July 1984. From 1985 to 2011 she took the responsibility for promoting and dispatching the Mariannahill Magazine "MMM", the book keeping, and the care for the ladies who delivered the magazine to the people. She was also assistant to the house superior at Neuenbeken, and her representative from 1996 to 2003.

In 2011 she retired from her active service. The last years of her life were difficult. Her physical strength and sense of orientation dwindled, and painful memories of the distant past tortured her at times. We are grateful that she went home peacefully on the feast of Corpus Christ. In the hymn of first Vespers we sang

Lead us on the way to the goal of our hope,
where your light embraces us in great happiness.

Amen

We hope and trust this is granted to Sr. Judith now.

We thank her for her long years of devoted and competent service in different fields of our congregation.

R.i.p.