

In Memoriam

Sr. M. Myrona Starker CPS

***28 March 1933**

†03 January 2022



Sister Myrona - Maria Starker - was born as the third child of her parents on 28.03.1933 at Waldenburg in Sudetenland/ Silesia - now Czech Republic. She grew up with seven other siblings, four girls and three boys; one brother having died when he was only nine months old. Her early childhood was shaped by her Christian home, which gave her a sense of security, but also challenged her to help out in the house and garden and to take responsibility for her younger siblings. At that time, the parish belonged to the Archdiocese of Breslau.

On 1 September 1939 Maria entered the local primary school. After 4th grade she changed to the municipal secondary school in nearby Freiwaldau which, however, she could attend for only one year due to the onset of war. She had to return to primary school. In February 1945 all schools were closed down. On 8 May 1945 Russian troops occupied the area; in July 1946 the Czech government took over and the German population was expelled. After enduring many hardships including hunger, strangeness and the sickness of two of their children in various camps the family was finally able to settle at Waldstetten in Baden-Württemberg, where for ten years they lived in a former ski hut in dire poverty, without tap water or electricity.

At Waldstetten, Maria finished Standard 8 and graduated at Easter. Thus, she attended altogether barely 6 years of primary school. Her wish was to become a kindergarten teacher and so she took up a job as assistant at the kindergarten run by religious sisters at Waldstetten. However, financial straits did not allow her to do the required studies, so, she enrolled in a seven-month housekeeping course, which she completed successfully. In November 1951 she hired herself to a business household. In addition to the usual chores, she was entrusted with the almost sole care of three children and more often than not helped out in the store. Various testimonials of this time testify to her skilfulness, conscientious discharge of duty, friendliness and extraordinary diligence.

Maria joined our Congregation in Neuenbeken on 13 April 1953. The parish priest of Waldstetten in his testimonial letter expresses the highest praise for the Starker family which, according to him, "is probably the best refugee family we have. They have consecrated themselves to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother Thrice Admirable (title given to Mary in the Schoenstatt Movement. Ed.). All the children are of one piece." He was not exaggerating but simply stating a truth borne out by the fact that two sisters also became Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood - Sr. Ursula and Sr. Mary Francis, another sister entered the Ursulines as Sr. Angela, brother Alois served as a Comboni Missionary in Peru, the oldest sister, Liesel, as pastoral worker, and brother Gottfried for many years as a development aid worker in Papua New Guinea.

At her reception into the novitiate on 14.08.1954 Maria was called Myrona, the name of the sister who had run the kindergarten at Waldstetten, a sister of whom she had been very fond and who had taught her a lot. Sr Myrona took her first vows on 15 August 1955 and her perpetual vows on 15 August 1958.

After a stint in the kitchen of our then Sacred Heart Hospital in Paderborn, she attended the domestic science school of the Neuenbeken Mission House for one year and after that was entrusted with leadership responsibilities in various houses and communities of our German province. From

1960 to 1965 she served as sister-in-charge at Arnsberg after which she took a course in business administration at the Meinwerk Institute in Paderborn. From 1965 to 1974 she was in charge of the community at Sacred Heart Hospital. Then, after doing the laundry for a while at the Neuenbeken Mission House, she became superior, successively, at Neuenbeken (1976-1982), Heilig Blut (1982-1989), on a temporary basis at the Brothers' Hospital in Paderborn and, after serving for a spell at the Neuenbeken Bildungshaus, at the Children's Spa in Bad Kissingen (1997), which continued as "House of the Good Shepherd" for the needy (November 2000). There were numerous temporary reappointments until in November 2013 Sr. Myrona was given a vote of honour and gratitude at a farewell celebration in Kissingen and returned to Neuenbeken for good.

This is how Sr Anna Dorothea Ax remembers Sr. Myrona from her time in Kissingen:

"Admirable was your youthful heart, your openness and flexibility in face of ever new challenges. You did a lot of servile work for all of us. You were available for every without making words about it. The well-being of our community was close to your heart. You always had an eye for people's needs and lovingly attended to them. You had a good heart, you listened, comforted and encouraged people. Wherever there was work to do you tirelessly did your share. Full of the love of God and mission, you were: a senior with a youthful heart, the servant of all, a trusting, exemplary believer, a woman of prayer."

What more is there to say!!!

On the night of 2 to 3 January, before the Feast of the Holy Family, the Lord received his faithful servant Sr Myrona into his glory.

We have already spoken of the faithfulness of the Starker family. Something else deserves mentioning which in 2011 was even written about in the daily newspaper. The Starker family owned a large cross, which a maternal uncle had carved and which was part of the family heirloom. When they had to leave home in 1946, they could only carry very few belongings, but the cross was one of them. They wrapped it in a blanket and took turns carrying it so that it would not get lost on the long marches or when riding in cattle trucks. As a precaution, they "amputated" one arm. In this way, the cross made it west and was kept at the parents' home, first, at Waldstetten, then at Paderborn, where they settled and finally at Neuenbeken. In 2011, the siblings unanimously decided to donate it to the Vincent-Home Youth Community to which Sr Myrona presented it with the words: "May this cross be a blessing to the young people who stay at the Vincent Home and to the staff who make God's love visible there".

R.i.p.



The 5 Starker Sisters at Sr. Myrona's 59th jubilee of Profession