

*The risen Christ
makes the life of a person
into an uninterrupted feast*

Athanasius von Alexandrien

OBITUARY

of our Sister Gertrud Petschan

***09.04.1942 † 21.11.2021**



Sr. Gertrud was born on 9 April 1942 in Großtajax/Djácovice near Znaim/Znojmo the present Czech Republic and she died on 21 November 2021 in Wernberg/Austria.

Sr. Gertrude, all your life you had a longing: If you were contemplative, you were urged to action - if you were active, you had a longing for prayer and seclusion. Did you get that from your parents, who were both in a monastery long before they met? Or, because you were expelled from your home country at the age of 3? On holiday with a youth group in Wernberg, you were struck by God's call on 1.9.1960 like a blow from a club: "Why don't you go and tell people about Christ?" In 1961, against the will of your mother, you entered the convent in Wernberg and when you were accepted into the novitiate you received the name Bartholomäa. Working with the youth, you soon found this name not very suitable and went back to your baptismal name. Coming from an academic family, your mind made you long for further education, which had not been possible for you as a youth. However, because of your weak nerves, you were not up to the demands of a Matura school and went back to the convent. In the central office of the catholic youth organisation you were offered an attractive working place and you worked there very successfully for many years. Later you changed to pastoral care in parishes. But within you, - the successfully active one, - the longing for contemplation became so strong that you entered the Benedictine Abbey of St. Gabriel in Styria. After two years, you returned to your home convent in Wernberg.

The big question was deeply rooted in you: "Who is this Christ I am to tell people about?" Vatican Council II became a ray of hope for you and so did the ecumenical movement of Taizé. "Struggle and contemplation" became a basic motif of your life. You were always comforted by the Psalms, in whose diversity you saw your life reflected.

This "telling of Christ" led you to follow a call to Romania, now open to the West. For 20 years you acted there as "a priest, social worker, manager" in the small, forgotten village Tyrol, 100 km south of Timisoara and as a contact person" for countless helpers from Austria and Germany. Together with your fellow sisters, you were "the soul" of the village, as the inhabitants said. Your working experience in Carinthia with the bilingualism, Slovenian-German, helped you to make bilingualism in the church service palatable to the mostly German-speaking Catholics. The village flourished; the "Casa Maicilor" with the social centre St. Anna became the centre of the village where anyone and everyone could come to with any concerns. In the course of time, the situation in the village became more and more difficult, German speaking inhabitants emigrated and Romanians moved into the houses. The character of the village changed. You always spoke of Romania as the most beautiful time of your life and your heart remained there.

Your time there came to an abrupt end due to your Parkinson's disease. As a result, the Congregation could no longer maintain this mission station. Your love for Romania and for the



underprivileged people there did not diminish. Together with socially committed friends, you founded the day centre "Star of Hope". About 50 children get a warm meal every day, can do their schoolwork and spend their free time there. Your contacts with Romania and all the helpers gave you support even in the most difficult hours of your life.

What is this "uninterrupted celebration" that was your leitmotif? Now, that you were severely marked by your illness, that your communication was reduced to a minimum, that your eyesight was very weak, and the question about God urgent in you was? Does it take place within you?

It is our wish that you arrive at home with God, that your longing is satisfied and fulfilled; that you are together with your parents and your siblings Franz and Maria, with all your friends who were life giving to you and with the many people from the village of Tyrol.

On the Sunday of Christ the King your Lord called you home. You leave a gap with us and with many people. May you now, with the possibilities of eternity, be an incentive and help for all of us to proclaim Christ through our lives.

Sr. Pallotti and Sisters