

## OBITUARY

of our Sister

**Virgina Hennerbichler**

\* 08.05.1923 † 06.05.2023



Sr. Virgina was born on 08 May 1923 in Silberberg, parish of Kaltenberg in Upper Austria, and died on 6 May 2023, two days before her 100th birthday in Wernberg.

Sr Virgina, you were baptised on 9 May with the name Maria and were the first child of your parents Franz and Anna. Your father had a small farm from which the family could live. You had six brothers and sisters in a short time and when the youngest was 3 ½ months old in 1933, your mother fell seriously ill and died. You cared for your little siblings as a 10-year-old girl until your father remarried in the autumn of that year. "In this way I was not spoiled," you write in your curriculum vitae. Your father found a good wife in the neighbour's daughter Klara, and the family was enriched by three more children.

You attended the seven-grade primary school in Kaltenberg, where you were a very good pupil. The seed for joining the Religious life was planted by your parish priest at the end of school. You left home in 1946 and became a housemaid in Weitersfelden. This family had small children and again the mother fell seriously ill and died. You took care of the children, the house, the stable and the animals until your employer remarried. Your younger brothers and sisters also grew up and were able to help, so you felt free to take the step to become a missionary sister. You were discussing your plans with our Sr. Alma Hörleinsberger.

You entered Wernberg on 19 March 1950 and did your religious formation there. On 3 May 1952 you made your First Profession and soon afterwards you were missioned to the Mariannahill Fathers in Riedegg. In 1955, after your Final Profession, you left for Zimbabwe, the then Rhodesia. Without understanding a word of English, you set off with our Sr Agathe Schwab on the three-week journey by ship to Cape Town, then you continued by train to Bulawayo. Our sisters had been in the country since 1909. You were always working in the household, garden or laundry at almost all the stations.

You made sure that all the sisters, pupils and staff had enough to eat - which was not always easy.

The time of the freedom struggle from 1976 onwards was very challenging and in the same year one of our Sisters, Sr Maria Francis van den Berg, fell victim to an assassination attempt. In 1977, Sr Ferdinanda Ploner from Carinthia died in an attack. After further assassinations of missionaries, the Congregation left the Sisters from Europe free to return to their home countries. You and other sisters remained in the country with the local sisters. In 1979, the war ended. Houses and schools had fallen victim to attacks and a new start had to be made. The effects of the war on the sisters could not be "rebuilt" so quickly. You were still in Zimbabwe until 2000, and then you came back to us in Wernberg. You liked to help with the vegetables, ironing the laundry or in the refectory. Around Christmas 2018 you suffered a stroke and since then you have been lovingly cared for in our nursing ward.

Your widespread family was always very important to you and during visits, you came alive and loved to tell stories about your childhood and youth. It was not easy for you to accept the fact that you saw less and less and that your hearing had also declined. However, you were very patient, sat on the bench in the dining room and prayed the rosary. You were in bed for only two weeks. In the last days your thoughts went back more and more often to your youth and you also said you wanted to go to your sisters and "Father, Mother, help me!". One of your principles was always felt by us: "It is better to listen than to speak".

We thank you for your life in our community, for your witness of a true Missionary Sister of the Precious Blood, for your sign of hope in suffering, for all goodness and for many small faithful services.

Sr. Pallotti and fellow Sisters