

Participants in Dramatic Presentation that Follows.

Narrator 1.

Narrator 2.

Archbishop

Secretary

Vicar

Mother Theresa

Confessor

Sisters – response of group.

Minutes¹

Taken in the Motherhouse of the Poor School Sisters
on the Anger in Munich, April 22, 1852, 6 p.m.

Narrator 1: At noon on April 21, the archbishop's secretary² asked what time the archbishop could meet with the venerable mother superior,³ the reverend confessor,⁴ and all the professed sisters because he had a public announcement to make. Reverend Mother set the time for 5:30 p.m.

Narrator 2: On April 22 at 4:45 p.m., the secretary came to inspect the room prepared for the meeting and was taken to the chapter room that had been arranged simply for the occasion. The secretary found it too gloomy and said that we had such beautiful rooms. Why could we not have chosen another? We responded that we had only one other room but it was much smaller. He could look at it, but it would no longer be heated and so he left it at that.

At 5:45 p.m., Archbishop Karl August [von Reisach] came with Doctor [Friedrich] Windischmann, Vicar General. They were met at the entrance by the Reverend Confessor, Reverend Mother, and two sisters and then by all the professed sisters who were in the convent corridor.

Narrator 1: Upon his arrival in the room, the archbishop began:

Archbishop: "Recent events⁵ make it my duty in conscience, as your bishop, to direct my attention to your institute, which still does not have church approval. Therefore, I considered my episcopal rights and set down in a decree what I found necessary. Now I will have it announced.

"I summoned all the professed sisters of the motherhouse (Bernardine [Stießberger] was ill) along with the superior and your confessor, through whom I will give you my orders and commands from now on. Each of you must state freely and unreservedly whether or not you will obey the demands stated in the decree. Now, Secretary, read the manifesto."

Narrator 1: Then the archbishop's secretary read the decree aloud,⁶ whereupon we stood up, although we had been allowed to sit during the introductory speech. Our confessor remained standing because the secretary's coat and hat were on his chair.

¹ Continuation of **Document 1171**: Minutes taken by an unidentified sister during a meeting at the Motherhouse of the Poor School Sisters on the Anger in Munich on April 22, 1852

² Joseph Glink

³ Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger

⁴ Mathias Siegert

⁵ At the mission in Rottenburg in Württemberg

⁶ See the note to the minutes taken by Windischmann for the contents of the decree.

After that, the archbishop began:

Archbishop: “You have heard the decree and you will have understood it. I am here in God's name and in the name of the Church and I have the right to demand this obedience. I will punish every act of rebellion and every act of disobedience of these, my commands, with the severest canonical censure. I will write my resolutions in accordance with these commands and send them to you.”

Narrator 2: Then there was a long, tense pause, after which the archbishop called upon Reverend Mother to begin.

Reverend Mother approached the table, knelt down, and began:

Reverend Mother: “Your Excellency, I see from all of this that the decree pertains to my person alone. I humbly beg pardon and I ask that my sisters would not have to suffer because of me. I have never acted on my own but always with the consent of the church and I was never disobedient, but to obey unknown commands – we could never do that.”

Narrator 2: The archbishop interrupted her, shouting vehemently:

Archbishop: “Unknown commands! How can you talk about unknown commands when your bishop issues them? Do you want to portray me above all as the one who does you wrong? I am not interested in your person but in ‘God’s work,’ as you call it, and the salvation of the souls of those who have entered the religious institute in order to strive for perfection. It is my duty to save them.”

Reverend Mother replied,

Reverend Mother: “According to this, I can no longer be the superior. I beg pardon of all the sisters.”

Narrator 1: The sisters stepped forward, knelt down, and cried with one voice,

All: “Oh Reverend Mother, Reverend Mother, you never . . .”

Narrator 1: The vicar general stood up immediately, yelling,

Vicar General: “None of this nonsense! Stand up!”

Narrator 1: His Excellency repeated his words, adding,

Archbishop: “Stop your wailing!”

Narrator 1: Reverend Mother was then called upon to dictate her statement. She responded once again,

Reverend Mother: “I have never done anything against the church, but in such an important matter, one cannot speak without having time to think about it. It affects the life of the order and if the events . . .”

His Excellency spoke:

Archbishop: “I am the one to decide about what has happened. You only have to state whether or not you will obey me.”

The vicar general spoke:

Vicar General: “With whom are you connected?”

Reverend Mother: “With the church.”

Vicar General: “Who is the church?”

Reverend Mother: “The bishop.”

Vicar General: “Then whom will you obey?”

Reverend Mother: “The bishop.”

Vicar General: “Now you are contradicting yourself.”

Reverend Mother: “I mean, shouldn’t we be allowed to continue our former observance until our rule is settled, as we requested? Your Excellency explained the Holy Rule to us and gave us instructions on it and I always governed the sisters accordingly.”

His Excellency said:

Archbishop. “We will not speak about the events and it is my business whether or not the rule goes to Rome. I will see to it.”

Vicar General: “Immediately!”

Archbishop: “I worked on it for three weeks. That is one proof.”

Vicar General: “And that includes the decree, which you have to obey only until the rule is approved. Do not think for a moment that the Holy See will release you from obedience to the archbishop.”

Secretary: “The superior thinks the order will be changed completely. You need not fear that.”

Archbishop: “I will certainly take experience into consideration, but now you must state whether or not you will obey me. ‘Yes’ or ‘No!’ It makes no difference to me.”

Narrator 2: Then Reverend Mother addressed the sisters:

Reverend Mother. “Yes, Sisters, speak now. I have never done anything without your counsel, dear Sisters, and this is not only about me. It involves the very life of the order. Speak now as you do in chapter. You are my councilors and you see that I cannot speak.”

Archbishop: “Forget the chapter! You are to make a statement, not the sisters.”

Vicar General: “The sisters will be called and they must submit their statements, one by one.”

Sister Margaretha [Käß]: “Yes, Reverend Mother, yes.”

Sister Foreria [Schießer]: “Reverend Mother, you always taught us to be obedient to the church and to love his Excellency. You always submitted to the church and you also stated that you will submit to this decree in accordance with our former observances until our rule is approved by the Holy See.”

Narrator 2: Reverend Mother was repeatedly asked to make a statement, but she responded:

Reverend Mother: “I cannot.”

Then the confessor began to speak:

Confessor: “I was also summoned to appear here and to speak and I was the first one mentioned in the minutes.⁷ Therefore, I now request permission to speak. This appears to be such an important matter and accompanied by such momentous circumstances that I think the superior and the sisters ought to be allowed to seek counsel with God as to whether or not they can give their consent in conscience. I believe, therefore, that I may humbly beg that you would grant them time for reflection.”

Vicar General: “But my dear Father Confessor, one does not need a long time for reflection to answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ Are we doing something wrong?”

Reverend Father: “Nothing wrong, but turning to the archbishop⁸ in regard to other dioceses is contrary to our former practice. We always dealt directly with the respective diocesan bishop.”

Archbishop: “That is not true! Father Confessor, you are not in the confessional where you give advice and the bishop is not arguing. What we have said up to now only served to explain the whole situation. Today, it is a juridical act. Reverend Mother, speak!”

⁷ See the opening to archiepiscopal secretary’s minutes.

⁸ Karl August von Reisach, Archbishop of Munich (1846-56)

Vicar General: “Dictate! What you say will be written word for word in the minutes.”

Reverend Mother: “Because my request according to our former observances . . .”

Vicar General: “That is not necessary. Just say whether you submit or not. Who is supposed to be over you? You call yourself a general superior. Who gave you this office?”

Confessor: “The secular government calls her this; she herself does not want it.”

Archbishop: “We know that.”

Vicar General: “So you do not want anyone over you? By whom, then, is your institute supposed to be governed? Do you, a woman, a weak woman, a very weak woman, want to continue to govern such a great work without ecclesial authority? That is precisely what you want – no one over you.”

Confessor: “I certainly know the difference when it comes to episcopal rights . . .”

Vicar General: “Silence! You were not asked to speak!”

Archbishop: “Silence! You are not in the confessional where you give advice.”

Vicar General: “Mother Superior, dictate!”

Reverend Mother: “I do not know what I have already dictated. Please, Secretary . . .”

Vicar General: “Nothing has been written yet.”

Reverend Mother: “I submit to the church, as heretofore.”

Vicar General: “Then who is the church?”

Reverend Mother: “The bishops.”

Confessor: (who understood, “The bishop.”): “Reverend Mother, one bishop does not constitute the church but all the bishops together.”

Vicar General: “Be quiet or leave!”

Confessor: “Reverend Mother, we must submit to the church.”

Narrator 1: The vicar general could not contain himself any longer, but went to Reverend Father, grabbed him by the shoulder, and shoved him, saying,

Vicar General: “Confessor, get out!”

Narrator 1: The archbishop also stood up, angrily repeating the same thing.

Narrator 1: Bowing deeply, Reverend Father replied,

Confessor: “Yes, I am going, but I did not say anything wrong.”

Narrator 2: With one voice, Reverend Mother and the sisters begged him to stay, but he left.

Archbishop: “In God’s name, I call upon you now to state whether or not you will obey.”

Reverend Mother: “Before the judgment seat of God, I could not say anything else and I do not even know what I said anymore. Sisters, please help me!”

Sister Foreria: “I submit according to the former observances.”

Vicar General: “The superior is supposed to dictate, not you.”

Sister Foreria: “I am not dictating but only repeating the words that I heard from Reverend Mother’s own lips.”

Reverend Mother: “I cannot go on.”

Vicar General: “Let the sisters leave! You will speak for yourself and then we will hear the sisters, one by one.”

Reverend Mother: “No, Sisters, stay here. I have never kept anything secret from you. You may hear everything. It is only that I am deeply moved.”

Sister Foreria: “Reverend Mother, you are extremely exhausted and have been suffering for months. Could some of the sisters make a statement and write some lines for Reverend Mother until she has recovered somewhat?”

Vicar General: “Mother Superior, you now have five minutes to think about this. Then I will dictate and you may say ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’”

Narrator 2: The Vicar General dictated some lines and then demanded once more that Reverend Mother dictate.

Reverend Mother: “Please repeat the sentence I began . . .” She wanted to continue.

Vicar General: “No, you may not continue. You may only say, ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’”

Reverend Mother: “Yes, I submit until the Holy See decides otherwise, according to our former observances.”

Narrator 2: The last phrase, however, was not written down.

Then the Vicar General said,

Vicar General: “Now, the sisters may only say whether or not they agree with the superior.”

Narrator 1: He only pointed to one after the other, saying,

Vicar General: “You?” “You?”

Narrator 1: Sister Foreria did not notice this and thought it was only a pause. Therefore, she knelt down before the archbishop and said,

S. Foreria: “In regard to this, your Excellency’s decree, I also vow what I have vowed to God.”

Narrator 1: His Excellency immediately turned his face away from her and the vicar general shouted:

Vicar General: “No! You can accomplish more with little children in school – than . . .”

Narrator 1: The archbishop banged the table with a container, stood up in a rage, and rushed toward the door saying,

Archbishop: “We’re going, but I will take other action. My hat! You cannot do a thing with these people. You can’t get anywhere.”

Narrator 2: The sisters hurried after him with Sister Foreria in the lead. She fell to her knees,

S. Foreria: “Your Excellency, please! I did not want to upset you. Did I say something wrong?”

Narrator 2: His Excellency did not seem to hear, however, and therefore the sisters kept repeating the plea until they got to the door, when the archbishop said,

Archbishop: “I wanted to do everything for your sake.”

Narrator 1: Nevertheless, he wanted to leave quickly.

Narrator 1: The vicar general followed the archbishop, but before he made his exit from the room, he pointed to Reverend Mother and said,

Vicar General: “You are destroying the entire institute.”

Narrator 1: Reverend Mother did not reply but said to a few sisters who stayed behind,

Reverend Mother: “Please go and ask; I cannot go any further.”

Vicar General: “Nothing more will come of it.”

Narrator 2: In the meantime, the first sisters repeatedly begged him to return.

Sister Foreria: “Your Excellency, please, Reverend Mother is ill. . . .”

Vicar General: “No, it is only a pretense.”

Sister Foreria: “I beg your pardon. For months, she has been suffering terribly and if his Excellency had seen her during this time, he certainly would not have been surprised that she was so exhausted. We were amazed that she withstood so much.”

Narrator 2: Weeping, Ludovica [Pfahler] said the same. His Excellency kept moving as if to leave.

Sister Foreria: “Please, your Excellency was always our good father. Will it be so no longer?”

Archbishop: “For your sake, I will go back,” but he turned to Foreria and said in an undertone, “That woman in there annoys me,”

Narrator 2: meaning Reverend Mother who was still in the room. Oh, how our hearts bled at such talk, but we had to remain silent.

Narrator 2: Upon returning to the room, his Excellency said to the vicar general,

Archbishop: “Call one sister after the other. Each one should submit her statement.”

Sister Foreria: “I submit to the decree according to our former observances.”

Narrator 1: The last phrase was passed over in silence.

Vicar General: “Therefore, I submit to the decree.”

Sister Foreria: “Yes, as Reverend Mother submitted, according to our former observances.”

Narrator 1: This was not written in the minutes, however, and the sentence ended with “submitted.”

Sister Ludovica: “I declare likewise.”

Vicar General: “Therefore the same? Don’t you have a phrase to add?”

Sister Ludovica: “Yes, I will keep my vows to God.”

Vicar General: “Well, yes.”

Narrator 1: This sentence was not written down. The rest of the sisters were allowed to make a statement as they wished, but these sentences were not written down either, no matter how often they were said.

Narrator 2: There was one exception. Sister Josepha Hermanna [Glink] dictated,

S. Josepha: “I declare that I will obey the decree, but only in the same sense as Reverend Mother would have declared if she would have been allowed the necessary time for reflection.”

Sister Margaretha: “For God's sake!”

Reverend Mother: “What did she say?”

Sister Foreria: “Thanks be to God! A thousand thanks be to God!”

Narrator 1: (All three repeated this in an undertone.)

Vicar General: “Your Excellency, do you approve this?”

Archbishop: after deliberation: “Yes, I approve it. It should be written as evidence . . . The minutes are going to Rome.”

Narrator 1: Then the rest followed. After the last sister had made her statement, the vicar general spoke:

Vicar General: “Call the superior to sign.”

Sister Foreria: “Reverend Mother is already here; she only stepped back. Please, Reverend Mother, step forward.”

Narrator 1: Then Reverend Mother signed, but her hand was trembling and she could not complete the word, “Superior.” She told Foreria to write it for her, which she did with a trembling hand. Then she signed her own name, and the other sisters followed.

Narrator 1; In the meantime, the archbishop spoke with the vicar general. After the last sister signed, the archbishop stood up and said,

Archbishop: “I regret very much that I had to see for myself what I long suspected. I was not mistaken. I saw it correctly and I found what I feared. This never happened to me in any other convent. The decree must be deposited in the archives, as well as the minutes, which I will send tomorrow with the rest of my orders. Every contrary action will

be severely punished according to canonical censures.”

Narrator 1: We never received the minutes, however, and no further orders came from his Excellency either.

Narrator 2: When Sister Margaretha asked to be allowed to speak a few words with his Excellency, he replied,

Archbishop: “No, I am only here on business today,” and hurried toward the convent entrance.