

## **Vignettes of King Ludwig and his Support of Mother Theresa “Mutter Theresia,” by S. Leobgid Ziegler, SSND**

### **1. Death of Father Job: Choosing to Appeal to the King for Help<sup>1</sup>**

Fr. Francis Sebastian Job died on February 13, 1834, and Caroline (Mother Theresa) had little income with which to support her new community. In her biography of Mother Theresa, Sister Liobgid Ziegler, SSND tells us the following story.

The news of the sudden death of their fatherly protector fell upon the little convent-community in Neunburg like a stroke of lightning. The future stretched blank before them. Who would provide for them? Caroline had released all claim to the revenue of the Girls' School; the pension of Father Job should have been security for the coming year; Father Siegert had given up his position and no longer had any income: Father Job had promised security for his needs also. Now the source of their maintenance had dried up before it had begun to flow.

In the city of Neunburg the death-notice stirred up great excitement. The building was half finished; the endowment for the building had been paid by Father Job only in installments. What would happen if there was difficulty in getting hold of the rest of the money? The enemies of the cloister-school got the upper hand; it was as if the evil spirits of hell were loosed against the poor little convent. Enemies insultingly ridiculed: “The one-and-a-half nuns—(they considered each of the three young women a half nun, because they did not wear a religious habit)—can go back where they came from.” They disapproved because they really did not want any religious; others feared the city would have to provide for them; these wanted the building stopped. The entire foundation was made questionable.

The faithful heart of Caroline did not hesitate long. On the nineteenth of February the death-notice had struck Neunburg; on the twenty-fourth she was already in Regensburg on the way to Vienna. She would find out how Father Job's endowment-money could be liquidated. She had barely the necessary traveling-money and the trip by boat was very disturbing both on account of the prevailing cold and because of the danger of floating ice. In Vienna she stood utterly alone as she hesitated to seek assistance from Father Job's acquaintances. His housekeeper received her with the sarcastic words: “Oh, are you already here to collect the inheritance?” At the Court, however, Caroline was told that Father Job's endowment would be available as soon as official notice came from Bavaria that the religious institute was properly established and who should receive the money.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from *Mother Theresa, (Mutter Theresia)* by S. Liobgid Ziegler, SSND. Trans. by S. Dolorita Mast, SSND, c. 1949, pp.62-66.

This decision gave Caroline further anguish. She well knew that the building of the cloister-school in Neunburg vorm Wald had received official approbation, but not the religious society that was to care for the school. She knew also that such approbation proceeded slowly through successive appeals and that in the case of her Institute there was a strong obstacle: according to current decrees a cloister-foundation could be considered for approbation only when a finished rule and a suitable capital for building and maintenance could be produced or assured. Caroline could promise neither. Father Job was no longer on earth—he who had thought to receive quick official approval for the material foundation through his influence at Court. If the final approval was withheld then the money would not be transferred and the cloister would have to be abandoned.

## **2. Strategy for Gaining Access to Power: Decision to Meet the Empress of Austria**

Caroline saw no other way out than to appeal for the establishment of the cloister at the highest Court in the land. She made the decision with unwavering trust in the intercession of the holy Founder who would be presenting her case before the throne of God. From Vienna on March 10, 1834, she wrote directly to **King Ludwig I.**

“To God be all praise and honor!” With these words Caroline began her petition, in spite of the difficult situation she was in. She explained the peculiar conditions of Father Job’s endowment as well as the current need of the small religious family of Neunburg; she begged the King, in the name of the deceased Founder, for the final official title to the foundation and for a tax-free importation of the materials and holy vessels Father Job had acquired for the cloister-chapel. She ends her petition: “If your Royal Majesty confers this charity upon us School Sisters, we will be happy to pray and work for the youth of our fatherland our whole life long, living quietly separated from the deceitful world.”

On the same day Caroline wrote to her Bishop and begged for the Episcopal support of her petition to the King. Finally, to profit by the last and best resource, she went to visit the Empress of Austria, who had held her confessor [Fr. Job] in high esteem and who knew about his foundation at Neunburg vorm Wald. Through her, Father Job had expected to receive the support of her brother, **King Ludwig of Bavaria.** She had been truly willing to lend her intercession for the completion of the work that had been so dear to the heart of her esteemed spiritual Father.

The royal lady received Caroline lovingly, allowed her to lay the whole situation of the little cloister-community before her, listened understandingly to the difficulties that hindered further steps toward the final goal. She promised to appeal to her brother for a quick settlement of the whole business. Her letter, which Caroline was to present personally at Munich, was brought to Caroline the next day by

one of the Court attendants; with the letter was a gift of 100 gulden. (Gulden—same as florin; the Austrian florin, last coined in 1892 was worth 48.2 cents) Comforted and encouraged by the Queen's graciousness, Caroline left Vienna for Munich. Even in late years she wrote of the grateful memories she had of the friendly Empress: "This audience comforted me beyond measure as I was sinking in the sea of sorrow the death of our saintly Father Job brought. With real motherly love this gracious lady received me and reached me a helping hand in a critical hour."

### **3. Support of Hierarchical Church Leaders**

When Caroline stopped off at Regensburg, Bishop Schwaebbl handed her his petition to the King, and the Cathedral-dean, Melchior von Diepenbrock, gave her an open letter to his friend the Cabinet-secretary, Ritter von Kreuzer, to whom he warmly recommended her. How well God was working to ease her way to the King!

In Munich Caroline procured a garret-room in a modest inn, looked up Ritter von Kreuzer and turned over her written petition for an audience; with it were the appeal of Her Majesty, the Empress of Austria, and that of the Bishop of Regensburg. It could have been the feast of St. Joseph on which she hoped the petition for approval of her religious foundation would be laid in the hands of the King. But the nineteenth and the twentieth of March went by without a call for Caroline. Then she ventured to appeal to the King personally, for she was strongly drawn homeward to her associates, who were alone now for a long time with their trouble.

### **4. King Ludwig's Intervention**

On the morning of March 21, she wrote her appeal and carried it to the King's palace. The same morning it came into the King's hands and with his signature passed to the Minister of the Interior, who had Caroline's other petitions for consideration. The King had written to the Minister: "It will mean much to me if you can possibly give a favorable decision this very morning on the two appeals which have been presented. Munich, March 21, 1834. Ludwig." The approval didn't come as quickly as the King wished, but on March 22 the draft for a final decree of approbation lay before him.

It is evidence of the acumen with which the King penetrated the business in hand. In his draft the Minister had stressed the question of endowment. According to him the religious institute "could be formed in the measure with which it had sufficient funds for the maintenance of its members and could promise future funds." It appealed to the higher government of the Oberpfalz

(Neunburg vorm Wald belonged to the province of the Oberpfalz) and advised “a closer consideration of the endowment and the means of maintenance, and asked that this account be sent with the constitutions of the Order and any modifications they considered necessary for its approbation.”

The King saw immediately that the official approval in this form would hinder rather than foster the Institute. He crossed out the dangerous clauses and inserted the approbation, “that the religious institute...henceforth exist, but without any promise of support from state-funds.” By this addition the King wished to correct the Minister’s idea and to avoid unfriendly debate in the Cabinet, which, until now had shown no understanding of his plans for restoration of the Bavarian cloisters. The foundation was saved through his decisive action. From now on it had the special interest of the noble monarch, who also knew how to give it financial assistance.

### **5. Caroline’s Unforgettable Meeting with King Ludwig I**

On the afternoon of March 22 Caroline received the summons to be on hand for an audience on the forenoon following. Before the appointed time she went to Church to beg God’s assistance for that important hour. She became so absorbed in prayer that she did not notice the time of her appointment slipping by. With troubled heart she hurried to the palace; there she was received very brusquely by attendants because the King had been kept waiting a long time; but the King himself received her with fatherly graciousness, expressed warm interest in the new Institute and handed her several papers. How could she imagine that all her troubles were over! She began again her petition for official approbation of her Institute. The King answered: “It’s already approved, everything is approved.” And as she, entirely bewildered, asked, “Is it true, really?” The King answered: “It’s already signed. Here! Read this! **Ludwig.** Take these to the government officials at Regensburg. It is my wish that the whole foundation be ordered according to the will and plans of the founder, the Court-Chaplain Job.” Dismissing her, he handed her 1000 gulden from his private purse.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A sharp reprimand from the Ordinariate (Bishop Schwaebel who had earlier supported her) was the answer to the Superior’s sincere explanation, (receiving monetary help from the King), which she had written with strong trust in God. Her questioning of ecclesiastical opinion, though based on facts, was taken as proof of her interior resistance to authority placed over her by God. They were offended because she had petitioned the King himself for expansion of the Order, and saw in her act a sure proof of the rumors which accused the Superior of the Neunburg house of ambition, dictatorship, and a misplaced and unwise zeal. Ibid. p.92-93.

## **6. King Ludwig Defends Mother Theresa in Legal Matters**

In the biography mentioned above, Sister Liobgid Ziegler relates that the new community quickly outgrew the quarters in Neunburg and Mother Theresa (Caroline had taken final vows in 1834 assuming her new name) wanted to move the motherhouse to Munich.

### **Decision to Move the Motherhouse**

The King, who went about all business of government with much intelligence, ordered his Minister to find out whether the transfer of the Motherhouse was compatible with the will of the Founder. Therefore the President of the Government of the Oberpfalz, in December 1839, had to decide whether the transfer of the Motherhouse was in agreement with the foundation decree and the President of the Government of Oberbayern received the order to find a building suitable for a motherhouse either in the Au or in Munich itself and, if possible, to transfer one or several of the schools to the sisters. “The Ministry trusts” – so reads the royal decree--: that the Government will give this affair its best consideration and that it will soon be possible to establish this highly beneficial institute in the capital and the seat of the court.” This did indeed, come to pass, though nearly two years fled by: a time full of struggle and opposition, full of trouble and hardship for the little cloister-community in the cramped Neunburg convent.

### **Struggles with Move to Munich**

President of the Government von Schenk on December 23, 1839, answered the royal order. He, who had known personally the saintly founders Father Job and Bishop Wittmann, gave the opinion that the “transplanting of the Neunburg Motherhouse to another place was against the expressed wish of the first donor and founder.”<sup>3</sup> He based this opinion on the foundation-decree and on the statutes of Job and explained further: “I was so convinced of this, above all, that when the Superior, Mother Theresa of Jesus (who had often been pointed out to me as a teacher distinguished in many branches but not entirely free from spiritual ambition)—when she told me about it, I could not refrain from asking her whether, in that case, she could be sure of the blessing and the intercession of her saintly founder in the same measure.”

As first, Bishop von Schwaebel shared the opinion of the President of Regensburg and let Mother Theresa feel, by many a severe reprimand, his displeasure over her “high-flying aspirations.” But voluntarily he changed his mind when he personally discovered the inadequacy of the Neunburg house.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1836, President of the Senate, von Schenk, wrote his praise of the unselfish work of the Sisters and reporter their evident need; and he proposed a yearly subsidy from district-revenues.” Ibid., p.88

Another trouble rose up. Von Schenk in his paper had also given the opinion that the transplanting of the Motherhouse in a large city “did not agree with the original spirit and character of the Order.” The Schoolsisters were destined for the training of female youth in small cities and country parishes, and for this purpose their training should be prepared. Therefore a motherhouse in the country should be preferred and the Neunburg cloister needed only an expansion to be adequate for the current needs of the Schoolsisters. This opinion appeared renewed in the ecclesiastical Counsel of the Archdiocese, the Cathedral-chapter in Munich. They decided: “The Schoolsisters will be overcultured and will not be suitable for the people in the country if they acquire a motherhouse in the capital.”

What was left for the oppressed Mother to do than all over again to offer, both personally and in writing, all her reasons for the necessity of transplanting the motherhouse?

### **7. Motherhouse Sites Suggested were Considered Unsuitable by Mother Theresa**

In the course of thirteen months she made three trips to Munich, a difficult journey each time, to visit houses offered to her and to receive again and again nothing but opposition. Three buildings in the capital offered her a narrow choice; three different plans for the erection of a Motherhouse in the Au-suburb had to be rejected as unsuitable—this in the course of a year. How difficult it was for her again and again to decline, when she realized how well-disposed everyone was toward the Order and feared to hurt the cause by her refusals. It gave her great pain when she had to oppose people of importance, whom she held in great honor, and who before this had assisted her in her troubles. Once the Archbishop von Gebstättel, before so friendly, was so provoked that he made her pride and ambition a subject of discussion, and she broke out into bitter weeping, but she considered herself bound in conscience to negotiate without self-consideration and without human respect.

### **8. King Ludwig’s Keen Mind Provides the Answer**

The settlement was finally made by the King. He, who was in favor of strictly correct proceedings but never a friend of long-drawn-out negotiations, made a personal study of the assembled acts and decided the question, whether the transfer of the Motherhouse was compatible with the foundation-decree; his conclusion he sent to the Archbishop of Munich. It reads:

“It is of the highest moral certainty that everything that is conducive to the expansion of the Order is in keeping with the intention of the Founder; everything, however, that hinders its expansion and its growth is against the intention of the noble Founder. But that a narrow interpretation of his wish, against the clear meaning of his words, would hinder the rapid

and beneficial expansion of his work—who could deny it when he considers the local circumstances in Neunburg and its experience up to this time?”

*The King adds: “It (the cloister in Neunburg) should be the Motherhouse, if God wills; it says so in the legacy. It has already been this. But that it should remain so,—that, I think, is not said.”* (Emphasis by editor)

He then gave the order to proceed further with the negotiations of transferring the Motherhouse to the capital of the country and to find a suitable building in Munich itself.

### **9. Choice of New Motherhouse in Munich and King’s Appreciation of Tradition**

The choice finally fell upon the old Cloister of the Poor Clares “am Anger.” As Mother Theresa stood before it, she shuddered at its appearance. It had been used for a long time as a poorhouse, was in total decay and part of it was tumbling down.

Besides, its surroundings, mostly second-hand shops, were not very trustworthy. But the place itself, made sacred by time, was full of a mysterious appeal. For almost 600 years it had given shelter to virgins consecrated to God. The old cloister-chapel was still intact and the Church of St. James was suitable in every way. That out-weighed every other consideration. Mother Theresa settled for the Anger-Cloister. The value was fixed and the business of exchange with the Magistrate—in whose possession it had come through sale—was begun.

### **10. Renovation Became a Constant Headache**

Again the King made an end to all opposition and difficulty. On May 23, 1841, he was pleased to declare that “in Munich a Motherhouse proper for the teaching needs for female schoolchildren in general should be founded...and for this purpose the former cloister-building of the Poor Clares “am Anger” should be released under the proviso of state-property.” By this act the oldest cloister in Munich, in which three princesses of the royal house had lived and died, (Agnes, daughter of Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria; Barbara, daughter of Count Albrecht the Good; Maria Anna, daughter of Elector, Max Emmanuel) was restored to its original beneficent purpose, for which 600 years before, it had been founded.

The decree of approval was completed and signed on June 28. President of the Government, von Hoermann, could not refrain from communicating the good news to the anxious Mother Superior. In Neunburg the joy and gratitude were so much greater as a few days before, the Sisters in the Au had heard the opposite. The President’s letter was received on July 2, “on the glorious feast of the

Visitation of Our Lady,” as the happy Mother noted on the letter she sent to Neunburg.

### **Mother Theresa Takes Things into Her Own Hands**

On October 24, the work began with the wrecking of the decayed part. The Ministry previously had hired an architect but his plans did not meet Mother Theresa’s wishes. In a sleepless night she took ruler and pencil and finished a plan that finally received the approval of the highest building officials and served as the ground plan for the entire building