



*"In their old age they continue
to bear fruit...*

*They shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that
the LORD is upright."*

Psalms 92:14&15



A tell-tale from the life of Sr Caritas Hediger, Maria von Berg, Menzingen, shared with Sr. Fatima who asked her:

Looking back over your life since you stopped active ministry till now - how would you describe your journey?



Sr. Caritas: Our life is but a walk...

We are looking forward to sunny and good hiking days, where we can recharge our batteries and leave everyday life behind. Before leaving, I have to think about where I want to go? Do I have the necessary strength and prerequisites for this goal? Then it's time to pack your rucksack. What do I take with me? For a long hike, I need a compass. You never know if fog will unexpectedly prevent visibility. Rain protection and fortifying provisions and drinks also belong in the rucksack. The hiking sticks can be a good support. The mobile phone is a great help for emergencies. The joy and hope of having a happy time and the enthusiasm should also be my companions. With the well-packed rucksack, the planned part of the trail can be mastered well.

Our life is like a hike. We are always on the way and carry our rucksack with us. In the rucksack of life, we pack everything that can help us to cope well with the path and to achieve the set goal. This includes school, vocational training, studies. Talents and gifts help to master the path of life well. The experience of the past also helps to make successful progress. Encounters and conversations along the way can be ground-breaking and enriching and help to achieve the goal well.

Maybe the sun doesn't always shine on the path. That's no reason to give up on the goal. On the way, this and that comes into the rucksack: stones, flowers, roots.... However, the weight can become a burden. Unload something? No, no! I need all that - not easy to LET GO.

A crossroads, an unexpected change in the weather, impassable terrain, no more visibility ahead... Such experiences make us pause and reflect. What's next? In case of uncertainty on the path of life, the following applies: listen inwardly. Deep down, I can feel: "I am with you. I am your companion. You're not alone." Maybe I need to ask experienced people about the way to move forward.

Sometimes we feel that we are carrying unnecessary things with us, which have become a burden and weigh us down like heavy stones; such as disappointments, unachieved goals, unfulfilled expectations, broken relationships, experiences of injustices, fears, worries... yet the journey requires us to tackle these burdens. But where to put them, I ask myself? At the Cross, we are allowed to lay down everything. Jesus said:

"Come to me, all of you who are overburdened and burdened with sorrows: I will let you breathe a sigh of relief".

And in the Epistle of Peter, it says:



"Throw all your cares on Him, for He is concerned about you."

It is very important for the hiker to take a break here and there along the way. It is necessary to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings, this awakens courage and joy and makes the journey ahead hopeful. Supporting good experiences, adventures and encounters are not a burden. There is always room for the beautiful and hopeful in the rucksack of life.

The thoughts of Dom Helder Camara are impressive and can also be ground-breaking for our life's path:



"It's a grace to start well. It is an even greater grace to stay on the right path. But the grace of graces is to go forward to the goal, even when exhausted."

We also need to reduce the baggage, get rid of the ballast of unnecessary fears, and decrease the bundles of worries to a tolerable level. What a relief when you no longer have to hold grudges against anyone. To be able to dump the burden of bad and past experiences on the garbage heap and be open to new opportunities. What you really need in the rucksack of life can easily fit in a small bag. Humour doesn't depress, it supports your back. Love is light as a feather and has no weight in the open hand. You don't have to wear tenderness, it carries you.



Crossing over from an active to a more passive life-style.

Sister Beatrice Horber, ninety years old, writes about her 'Second-to-last trip'



My transfer to St. Franziskus Nursing Home was planned for autumn 2022 but due to some unforeseen circumstances the move came quicker than planned.

I wasn't quite prepared but at my age of ninety years old and having obeyed my whole religious life, here I was beginning to pack all my belongings to take with me. I was happy that I could leave behind me all that I did not intend to take and this made life a little bit easier.

On the day following the news of my earlier leaving a nurse immediately came to work with me. After three days, the nurse came down with the flu and had to stay at home for a week. That brought me advantages... short-lived ones because I too took the flu and had to stay in bed with a fever and was not able to leave my room. As a result, the time of my leaving Maria vom Berg was extended by two weeks. I was happy with that!

Sr. Sandra and Sr. Carmela Maria made sure that all my laundry and clothes were provided with laundry number 594 and patched. What a wonderful gift!



Suddenly, I felt lighter and relieved. We made good progress with the clearing. I left a lot of things in the room. It became easier and easier for me. Two days before the **second-to-last trip**, as I call it, I said goodbye to the sisters while sharing three experiences I had while packing my belongings.

I love books and I own quite a few of them. Why did I leave so many behind me? Because I realized that there is little room for them in St. Franziskus. Later I heard that the books followed me to St. Franziskus, for the attention and use of the resident priests.

The **second-to-last trip** was getting closer and closer. I was more open and ready to leave Maria vom Berg. The only thing I miss to this day is the chapel. On July 15th, 2022, we left Maria vom Berg with bag and baggage.

In St. Franziskus I was warmly welcomed by Sr. Elsbeth, by the sisters and the nurses. Sr. Elsbeth accompanied me to the room on the third floor with a priceless, panoramic view. Nurse Dragana helped me unpack and made everything comfortable. In the meantime, Sr. Elsbeth delighted me with a beautiful orchid. I could only thank her and be amazed at such a welcome.

I feel lucky to be here as it gives me ample time to prepare myself spiritually for the next part of my life's journey.

All in God's hands



Interview between Sr Gloria Poblete and Sr. Maria Theresa Leuenberger.

Sr Maria Theresa originates from Switzerland and has been a missionary in Chile for many years. She is now ninety-six years old.

1. Looking back on your life from when you were in active apostolate and now in your retirement, how would you describe this journey?

I started with a lot of enthusiasm; everything was new. I worked very eagerly with the children in the school and each time there was something to learn. I was young then and the students were almost my age. I preferred some things more than others. I felt at home with the girls. I felt at home, in a family atmosphere and to this day I still have contact with some of them. For the first time I could evangelise. I could prepare the children for the sacraments. I could integrate with the families and this was my initial and deep desire to come to Chile to be a missionary.

2. What were your greatest challenges?

In my early days I faced difficult things, teaching things I didn't know. Later the bishop asked me to take charge of the catechetical department and I didn't want to be in an office. I had to learn new things. In obedience I gave myself



to the Holy Spirit and He enlightened me. This new mission pushed me forward. I felt fulfilled, forming catechists, biblical pastoral ministry, accompanying others as a big catechetical family and through all this I discovered that the spirituality of the Congregation was the same as that of catechesis. I was in that mission for twenty two years of my life.

When I finished catechesis, I had a new mission experience in Toltén. I was with the most abandoned people in the parish. I felt very integrated, forming home-based communities in the middle of the village, I accompanied a community of lay people from Santa Cruz.- they were my family.

3. What was the hardest thing to give up?

It was very difficult for me to leave the people and come to Betania. It seemed that God did not want me to stay there because there was no other sister to accompany me and I could not stay alone. It was difficult to renounce being among the marginalised and the poor and to lose a little of the freedom of being among the people on pilgrimage.

4. How did you respond to these challenges and difficulties?

At the beginning I felt useless. I had come with all my material to Betania in the hope of working with the sisters engaging in reflection together, but I didn't see much interest. Then I tried various things but nothing worked out. It is very difficult to leave the mission and arrive in the desert. With God's help and the company of the Holy Spirit, I have kept going until today.

5. Describe the time/moment when you felt you had to let go and accept your new lifestyle?

I didn't feel I had to let go. I didn't really want to let go; you could say it was forced upon me and it wasn't my will but I accepted to let go even though it cost me a lot.

6. How do you feel now that you have finished an active mission and are retired?

I feel grateful and loved by God. I have always felt His merciful love. Now I am occupied with the mystery of eternal life. One is never ready to leave. One is attached to the earth and to material things. My mind is occupied with that.

7. How do you describe this moment of grace?

I remain in hope with serenity in my heart. I trust that God is present in my life and has guided and accompanied me in all that I have done as a Missionary.

Dear Sr. Maria Theresa thank you for sharing your story with me. I too thank you for your long life and love for the people of Chile. May God continue to bless you.



“In their old age they continued to bear fruit... They shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright;” Psalm 92.14 & 15

Sr. Alma Keezhanjil shares:

Writing something on the theme **‘Dare to set out... a graced crossing’**... appears to me interesting and appealing. On opening the bible, we find stories of ‘daring-set-outs’ and a quick glance into the Old Testament, we encounter brave hearts like Noah,

Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Sarah, Tamar, Ruth and Esther. In the New Testament, especially Post Easter and Post Pentecost the events are all about women and men who ventured to go forth with incredible audacity and proclaimed Christ the Good News. A short glance into secular history



shows that every single human achievement is the result of a

'daring set out' made by someone somewhere on this earth.

Ultimately, they were all part of God's 'Master plan' of love and mercy for His creation; part of the unfolding of God's great Eternal design. His work in and through human beings chosen for those specific roles in humanity's salvation history. With joy I join to sing Isaiah of old:

"O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for indeed all that we have done, you have done for us."

Is 26:12.

How about those soul-stirring words uttered and 'daring set outs' made by Father Theodosius Florentini, whose 201st birthday we celebrated

"I need sisters who understand the cross"

And the inspiring words of our Foundress Mother Bernarda Heimgartner:

"Divine providence is our deposit account."

and other thought-provoking sayings by both of them.

What boundless trust and genuine confidence they must have had in God's never failing providential care and all-embracing love deep within them.

Their courage and powerful examples to be true to Jesus' call and His mission in the midst of opposition and difficulties galore, should enthuse and encourage us today to continue their charism with joy and commitment. We need to go forward fearless and hope filled, with the mission of Jesus, always remembering His

unalterable promise, 'Fear not I am with you,' Isaiah 41: 10.

Glancing back into my own life journey, I am happy and immensely grateful to God for the gift of life, human, Christian, and religious each filled with blessings. I thank God first of all, for the gift of faith in Him, for my loving God-fearing parents and family who taught me to love and live a God-centered life, in all situations and places.

My relationship with God developed through prayer, spirituality, Christian principles and my value-based mind-set and inner connectedness to the Lord who has accompanied me all through my life journey. This made me happy, confident, secure and serene, and gradually became part of my nature, during my school days and further through my fifty-eight years of religious life as a member of the Holy Cross family engaged in various ministries. The Lord's nearness was my greatest strength and His words always a support and consolation. He taught me through my experiences to cultivate a broader vision of things, to look beyond the immediate and empirical realities and struggles in life. He let me experience that He is faithful in all His promises and assurances.

To sum up, God who loves me and who has made me with plan and purpose (Ps 100:3, Jer 1:5) holds my hand and walks with me daily. O what a journey it has been... joy and deep gratitude fill my heart when I reflect back. In the last analysis, it was all leading towards an ongoing deeper and deeper understanding of myself, God, others, creation and even the purpose and meaning of life itself. All God's gifts:

"From His fullness we have all received" Jn 1:16



and His spirit helps us realize that He is "all in all". So, I humbly join the psalmist to muse on:

"O Lord our sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Ps 8:1.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" Heb13:8



Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Mt 28:20.

An interview between Sr Bernadette Duffy and Sr Patsy Mc Dermott (England) in the context of **the wisdom learnt from aging as a process from independence to dependence.**

"Getting old is like climbing a mountain; you get a little out of breath, but the view is much better!" – Ingrid Bergman

Having spent some time at the Grange and getting to know Sr Patsy we were then able to have the following conversation.

Sr. Patsy, looking back over the last few years of your life from retirement while still active to now settling into retirement how would you describe that journey? (Sr Patsy shares that her journey of transition all happened so suddenly and like a bolt of lightning she was forced to change her whole lifestyle. She tells her story with a mixture of joy and sadness...and with little sighs in between.)

"The year 2016 will always be a significant year in my life, especially the last Monday of October that year. It was a beautiful sunny day; better than most days we had that summer. I decided to use the day to start on some pre-Christmas cleaning. With classical music playing softly in the background I started upstairs with the visitors' rooms, then made my way through the corridors and so eventually I finished downstairs in the dining room. I was thoroughly absorbed and enjoying what I was doing until suddenly I was stopped in my tracks. I could not move or lift my right leg, it just seized up and refused to move. Fortunately, I was standing near the handrail and able to hang on to it. After what seemed like hours, I was able to hobble to a chair and to sit down and to try to make sense of what was happening to me. I never experienced anything like this before and felt very frightened. I was still sitting in the same place, when Sister Imelda, my community member, returned home from work that evening."

O dear Sr Patsy then what happened?

"Well, Imelda immediately tried to sort me out and settle me for the night. I was totally unable to go upstairs so she made a bed downstairs. The next morning, we left early for the hospital where I was assessed by the Triage nurse, prior to the arrival of the duty doctor. After his assessment, I was transferred by ambulance to the Cardiac Unit in Northwich Park hospital, where I was kept in for ten days. Immediately they began attending to me and I had numerous blood tests, X rays, body scans and intensive physiotherapy twice a day. Some days I felt as if I had run a whole marathon. Now, I understand how some of my patients must have felt when I nursed them in my earlier days. When the Medical Team came to a final diagnosis it was clear I would not be able to live in a house with stairs."

Ah, thank you for sharing your experience with me. Our Conversation continues...

How did you manage (feel) after you realised you would not be able to stay in your present community any longer?



“So, I was transferred from the hospital to the Grange Community where I was given a beautiful room and made feel very welcome. Above all I was in a place of peace and quiet. I suddenly had time to think and assess my situation. I realised that my independence was no more. I physically depended on others doing things for me and helping me to be as independent as possible. I was still very frightened, anxious and I felt really cross with myself for being so useless and helpless. There were many black, dark and uncertain days.”

How did you respond to these challenges and difficulties?

“I must say I tried my best to respond with gratitude as Sharon and her Team did not give up on me and now I know I have been extremely fortunate to be so well looked after here at the Grange. I have everything I need and I have just to ask for help and it is available. I am truly blessed and I thank the Lord every day for my community and my carers. This new outlook on life helps me to accept the challenges and difficulties of my ill health.”

How would you describe the moment when you felt it was time to let go and accept your new life-style?

“Each day as I continue to accept my new life living in the Grange community I feel I have travelled a long distance to find myself. I know I totally depend on my walking frame my ‘Special Friend’. I really cannot move anywhere without it. Now I have another ‘Special Friend’, a new helper, ‘My Pacemaker’. I truly did not realise how much it was needed to enable me to breathe and to feel God’s protection over me. This all gives me new hope.”

How do you feel now having made the ‘Cross-Over’?

“I am gradually becoming more aware how I am not alone on this road. I am convinced in my heart that there is a hand leading and guiding me. But I am not always aware of it and I have to sometimes do things (said with a little smile) ‘my way’ as I have always done. I have so much to be thankful to the Lord for, and I pray with joy and gratitude of knowing He is always there for me. And that I will always have the courage to reach out for Him and feel His presence close to me. I pray that I will be whatever the Lords done has been for Him be thankful for and now submit myself to being grace!”



What symbol when you reflect over from being dependent

comes to mind on the crossing independence to on others ?

“I think of open hands as a symbol to express how this journey is leading me.”

“Sr Patsy, thank you, it was really lovely having this time to listen to your story of change and the journey you have made in crossing from independence to being dependent on others for most of your needs.

God bless and I promise to keep you in my prayers.”

