

Her mission was in Germany

Sr Ildefonsa Grätz OP celebrated her 65th anniversary of profession on 3 May 2022 in the convent in Neustadt among her fellow sisters.

Sr Ildefonsa was born on 5 October 1933 in Rütchenhausen, a district of Wasserlosen in the district of Schweinfurt. Her baptismal name is Maria Hedwig. She had five siblings, "all girls", she says. Two sisters are still alive and she keeps in touch with them. Her parents ran a farm in Rütchenhausen and the girls helped out in the family business from an early age. After finishing school, Sr Ildefonsa trained as a dressmaker in Würzburg.

She was called to enter the convent as a young girl when she was allowed to carry the banner at the German Catholic Day in Fulda. She had stood in the front row and listened spellbound to the stories of a South African priest and a Dominican nun who had spoken about mission. At that time, she felt the desire to go to the mission. Her uncle, who was a priest, put her in touch with the convent of Sr Josef in Neustadt and took her there.

Sr Ildefonsa joined our congregation in Neustadt on 3 May 1957. Her wish to go to South Africa was not fulfilled. Her calling was the tasks she carried out in Germany. She helped in housekeeping in the convent in Neustadt and also in the sewing room. As she was a professional seamstress, she could do all the sewing and also all the mending work and was thus a valuable support.

For eleven years she lived and worked in the youth centre at Volkersberg. There she worked in housekeeping and in the kitchen and, of course, she also contributed her practical experience with needle and thread. "Back then, we sewed and hung all the curtains in the youth centre. We were busy with that for weeks," she says, still remembering this big project.

Sr Ildefonsa was also involved in the Congregation's boarding school and kindergarten in Dießen am Ammersee. In the Marienkrankenhaus in Flörsheim she worked in the kitchen. Most recently she was assisting in the St. Josef convent in Dießen both in the sewing room and in the kitchen.

Sr Ildefonsa also enjoyed playing the organ and supported the choir on the organ on many occasions.

Since 2018, Sr Ildefonsa has been spending her twilight years at the Caritas Senior Centre St Martin in Lohr. She is still in good health and often enjoys walking around the house with her walker. She follows Holy Mass on the radio every day.

Original text (in German): Martina Schneider