



## Obituary

**Sr. M. Liboria Menke OP**

**26.03.1931 – 17.06.2023**



*I live by faith in the Son of God,  
who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 2:20

Sr. Liboria Menke OP was born on 26 March 1931 in Eissen, district of Warburg, in the diocese of Paderborn. Her parents Konrad and Veronika Menke had her baptized with the name Maria Theresia. When Maria was one and a half years old, her mother died. As the youngest of four children, she was placed in the care of her aunt. Later her father remarried, so that Maria grew up in a large family with five other siblings. Throughout her life she maintained warm contact with her family.

Until 1945 Maria attended elementary school and experienced the hardships of war. She had to watch her parents' house being destroyed and her siblings having to seek shelter in different places. She herself was housed with a farmer. Here she had to work hard for her living.

As a sensitive child, she perceived both the beauty and goodness of her surroundings and the hardships and injustices of her time. This shaped her entire life.

From 1948 to 1950 she completed an apprenticeship as a dressmaker.

At the end of August 1951, she entered our Congregation of Dominican Sisters of Oakford/Natal in Neustadt, Germany. At her reception on 30 April 1952 she received the name Sr. M. Liboria. She made her First Profession in Neustadt on 21 May 1953.

She was then sent to South Africa in 1954, and was initially assigned both to teach and be trained for the teaching ministry in Oakford, specializing in music. In 1963 she graduated with a teaching degree in music. Her assignments alternated between Oakford, Greytown and Empangeni before she studied art in Rome from 1971 to 1975, earning another diploma in sculpture.

During this time, she lived and worked at the "Casa di Studio", our study house in Rome at the time. She also created various works of art there, which decorate rooms and delight people scattered all over the world.

From 1975 Sr. Liboria lived and worked in Neustadt. She was able to build on the solid foundation as a music teacher and sculptor to begin therapeutic work with mentally ill people, first in the district hospital in Lohr and from 1977, with the opening of the St. Michael Rehab Centre, in Neustadt. In order to be able to help people in a targeted way, she completed an advanced training course on trauma therapy in the Netherlands in the 1970s. This involved utilising the healing effect of natural materials. While working, she continued her education in relationship and family therapy in a three-year course. With her sensitive and kind nature, she reached many young people at a heart level through music and art and was thus able to help them discover new courage and meaning in life - and to make something of their lives.

In addition, Sr. Liboria was involved in the parish of Neustadt with the church choir and with her organ playing and thus had a significant influence on the liturgical life of the parish as well as in our community.

Sr. Liboria loved and was committed to community life. She was humorous, could laugh contagiously or touch and comfort others with a smile. At the same time, she could unmistakably communicate her own inner needs.

She remained active for the community into old age: she lovingly decorated the small chapel in Neustadt and, with her versatile talents, brought the tables to life on feast days with flowers, homemade cards and napkins. In this way, she not only expressed how much she enjoyed living and being at home in Neustadt, she also created an atmosphere for others to feel at home. The community's move to the Senior Citizens' Residence Kist in January 2023, therefore, meant a great challenge to her in dealing with having to let go.

In addition, Sr. Liboria's declining hearing painfully limited her ability to enjoy music and to maintain contact and exchange with others. At the same time, she deepened and intensified her inward listening and intimate contact with her God. She relied on his promise to be loved by him.

Sr. Liboria was able to gratefully celebrate this like a harvest festival on 21 May on the occasion of her 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of profession.

During the past months, Sr. Liboria became noticeably weaker. On the afternoon of 17 June 2023, she passed away in Würzburg, having finally allowed herself to be drawn into the loving presence of her God.

We are grateful for her richly full life and entrust her to the mercy and peace of God.

May she be an intercessor for us with all those who have gone before us.

*RIP*