



**ALPHONSE MARIE EPPINGER**

*The Greatness  
of a  
Simple Life*



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# 200<sup>th</sup>

**BIRTHDAY OF MOTHER**



## Important stages of the life of Mother Alphonse Marie Eppinger

- 1814 09.09. Elisabeth's birth.
- 1847 She sees the necessity to care for sick and poor and to pray for the conversion of sinners.
- 1849 08.28. She founds the Congregation of the Daughters of the Divine Redeemer.
- 1854 Foundation of the House in Würzburg.
- 1857 Foundation of the House in Vienna.
- 1863 Foundation of the House in Sopron.
- 1866 04.11. Papal approval decree.
- 1866 The Institutes in Vienna and Würzburg become independent.
- 1867 The Sopron Institute becomes independent.
- 1867 07.31. Date of Death of Mother Alphonse Marie.
- 1951 Opening of the Diocesan Process of Beatification.
- 2006 Retrial of the Process.
- 2011 12.19. Publication of the decree about the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Mother Alphonse Marie.

## Prayer For the 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary

Lord,  
our God, the Servant of God  
Mother Alphonse Marie  
was open to your call  
and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Her life was affected  
by the vision of the cross.

Openness to the signs of the times,  
the needs of the people,  
the poor and those seeking help was always  
a sign of God's love in our world.

Jesus, walk with us  
on our spiritual journey - deepen  
our communion with you  
and with each other  
in the sign of the cross and redemption.

Spirit of God, accompany us  
and guide us in our preparations  
as we journey towards this anniversary.

Help us to reply generously  
to the gift of our vocation  
to build community in everyday life  
and to put our life with its ups and downs,  
in work, prayer, sufferings  
at the service of salvation.

Give us the grace of perseverance  
that we may live according the directives  
of the Gospel in the spirit of our foundress,  
Mother Alphonse Marie,  
the Venerable Servant of God.

Mary,  
Mother of our Redeemer, accompany us.  
Amen.

## Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Saviour (Sisters of Niederbronn)



**1849** Elisabeth Eppinger founded with the help of her parish priest Fr. Reichard and the approval of the Bishop of Strasbourg the **Congregation of the Daughters of the Divine Redeemer** in Bad Niederbronn and she took the name Sister Alphonse Marie.

Even as a child she had asked questions about God and was affected by Jesus who was crucified. She discovered that the love of God applies to all people. She wanted to consecrate her life to God, and so contribute to other people finding him. From personal experience, she knew that suffering can be an obstacle to encountering the love of God. She felt driven to help people in their physical and spiritual needs, and she finally realized that she should establish her own Congregation.

Surprisingly quickly many young women joined her, the community grew and took on different tasks in response to the needs of the time. The Sisters took care of the poor, cared the sick in their homes and looked after abandoned children and those in any kind of need. They did this for the salvation of each person, regardless of any individual's status, national origin or religion.

Following requests from parishes and municipalities communities emerge in France,

Germany, Austria and Hungary in 1850. The Congregation opens itself up to an increasing variety of needs, living conditions and cultures.

Various circumstances combined to cause new Congregations to spring up from the Niederbronner Congregation: in 1866/67, in Vienna, Würzburg and Sopron and in 1916, another in Bratislava. Each of these Congregations began to develop successfully in an independent way and to prove themselves in difficult times - in times of war and in the period of communism.

The invitation of the Second Vatican Council to all religious communities to go back to their sources and to review the rules of their Order, led to reflection on the founding charism. The Congregations which were founded by Mother Alphonse Marie made new and deeper relationships with each other, and came to different forms of cooperation at the spiritual and apostolic level.

Two Congregations chose to amalgamate with the original Congregation, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Redeemer of Vienna, in 1999, and the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Holy Saviour of Bratislava, in 2009.

By 1857 the Sisters of Niederbronn were in Vienna taking care of orphans and caring for the sick in their homes. The Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Rauscher, supported the work of the Sisters which was developing very positively. In order to create better conditions for the growth of the community, Archbishop Cardinal Rauscher declared on 16.03.1866 the establishment of its own Motherhouse and novitiate in Vienna. This created the **Congregation of the Daughters of the Divine Saviour** which spread through Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Argentina.

Since 1896 the Sisters of the Congregation in Vienna have worked at the Children's Hospital in Bratislava / Hungary (now Bratislava / Slovakia). In 1912 they received an endowment for a house to care for poor sick people which was caught up in legal difficulties due to the existing political situation. In 1913 some of the Sisters asked the diocesan Bishop Cardinal Jan Csernoch if it would be possible for them to have their own Motherhouse. He was interested in it and, with Rome's official permission and after consultation with the Archbishop of Vienna and the Sisters of the new Congregation, called **the Sisters of the Blessed Savior**, he established it on 29.01.1916 according to the Memorandum in 1919. It spread through Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Germany.

Today the Sisters of Niederbronn live on four continents, in 13 countries and 60 dioceses, in the provinces: France (Portugal), Germany and Austria (Netherlands), Angola (Namibia), India, Slovakia (Czech Republic, Hungary) and in the delegations of Cameroon and Argentina.

The Congregation is active in healthcare, nursing and care of the elderly; in educational work in social and pastoral ministry, paying special attention to the poor and disadvantaged. It works together with all who have the same goal. In Europe and Argentina many lay people are in service with the Congregation, and lay people are the administrators in most institutions.

It is a concern of the Congregation to respond to the challenges of the day within the bounds of possibility wherever it finds itself: to respect life, to stand up for truth and brotherhood, justice and peace, women's dignity, to preserve creation, to promote spiritual and religious values, and to cooperate in building the Kingdom of God, including through prayer.

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## Congregation of the Sisters of the Redeemer



Mother Alphonse Marie sent Sisters to Würzburg to provide nursing home care and the care of orphans in 1854.

Many Institutes of Sisters were established in the Diocese of Würzburg. However, because the Motherhouse was in France, the Sisters were only tolerated and had no residence permit. Since all the efforts of the Bishop and the Magistrate of Würzburg for permanent rights to residence remained fruitless and the creation of a province was not possible, Bishop Georg Anton from Stahl received in 1866 the royal permission to set up an independent Congregation under the title: Daughters of the Most Holy Redeemer with the Motherhouse in Würzburg. The first Superior General was the Superior of the Würzburg House, Sister M. Honorine Steimer.

The Congregation grew rapidly, beyond the boundaries of the Diocese of Würzburg. According to the founding principles of Mother Alphonse Marie the Sisters displayed their love and strengths in caring for the poor, in nursing care, child care, education for girls, particularly in the housekeeping schools and needlework classes at elementary schools and they even took over housekeeping in institutions of the Church. During the "Third Reich" they also lent a hand with pastoral work in the parishes. In 1924 the Sisters answered a call to go to the USA. In 1941 a novitiate was established there. The establishment of the Province was in 1977. Starting in 1958 Sisters were sent to the mission in today's Tanzania and a novitiate was erected there in 1986. Based on our founding charism, we try to live out the works of mercy in our own time and to teach them to those who work alongside us.

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## Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Redeemer



In Vienna, Bishop John Simor of Gyor (Raab) got to know the Sisters from Niederbronn who had been working there since 1857. He

asked for Sisters for Sopron (Ödenburg). On May 19, 1863, four Sisters came to Sopron and lived in the house of the bishop. The task of the Sisters was to care for abandoned sick children and to educate orphans.

1865, Mother Alphonse Marie visited her Sisters in Sopron, which was a great joy for all. Concerned about the welfare of the whole person, the Sisters strove to care for the sick, to support the poor, take care of children and to educate and teach them; to assist those bereft of help and to show concern for those who have nobody. On June 13<sup>th</sup> 1867, Bishop Simor declared the house in Sopron independent and puts it under his jurisdiction. Thus, our religious community has been a separate Congregation with the Motherhouse in Sopron, Hungary since 1867. In 1955 due to the political situation in Hungary, the seat of the General Government was moved to Rome.

Currently there are three provinces and one region in seven countries:

- American Region
- Austrian Province (Italy)
- Hungarian Province (Italy)
- Slovak Province (Italy, Cameroon, Ukraine, USA)

Good relations continue to exist today among the Sisters of communities that have emerged since the foundation.

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"The spirit of the Daughters of the Divine Redeemer should be the spirit of Jesus Christ. Their lives should be completely modeled on his and take their direction from his life. His spirit should so totally animate and penetrate them that it becomes apparent in all their works and actions. Each Sister should be able to say with the Apostle, 'The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me' (Gal 2:20), so that the life of Jesus is evident in her whole being."

(cf Original Rule I, III)

