

The Cologne Carmelites



The history of our convent

- **1. Carmelite Convent Mary of Peace in Schnurgasse (5th November 1637 – 4th July 1802)**

Foundation of the first Carmelite Convent of the Teresian reform in Germany through Isabella de Spirito Sancto (Charlotta de Urquina) and Teresa a Jesu (Countess Violante de Croy -Solre).

- Queen Maria of Medici bequeathed to the convent a statue of Mary made from the wood of the wonderful oak of Mount Aigu.
- 14th October 1649 completion of the convent
- 18th September 1692 consecration of the church
- 4th July 1802 Napoleon shuts down the convent

- **2. Carmelites at St. Gereon (3rd June 1850 - 20th July 1875)**

1850: On initiative of Katharina Esser (Franziska of the Endless Merits) new revival of the Cologne Carmelite convent through sisters from Lüttich near St. Gereon. During the struggle between State and Church (1871-87) the sisters went into exile in Holland.

- **3. Carmelite convent Cologne – Lindenthal**

21st October 1896: return of a few sisters from Aachen to Cologne - Lindenthal in Dürenerstraße
14th October 1933 entry of Edith Stein



15th April 1934 clothing of Edith Steins

(Teresia Benedicta of the cross)

21st April 1938 final profession of T. Benedicta of the cross

28th April 1942 incendiary bombs hit the former convent church Mary of Peace, the picture of grace burns.

30th October 1944 complete destruction of the Carmelite convent in Lindenthal, the sisters moved to Welden.

- **4. Back to the source (from June 1945 ...)**

Cardinal Josef Frings urges the sisters to reconstruct the convent in Schnurgasse. In Autumn 1949 the first sisters move into the newly constructed convent.

The spirituality of the Carmelites

The “Order of the most blessed Virgin Mary from Mount Carmel,, takes its name from a mountain range in north west Israel, the geographical origin of the order. In the 12th century hermits settled there at the fountain of Elia. In 1210 the patriarch Albert of Jerusalem gave them a rule. In the middle of the 13th century the hermits moved to Europe and became medicants: living in cities, preaching and pastoral care, and living on alms. Under the general of the order Johannes Soreth women were first allowed to enter the order in 1452.

In the 16th century there was a universal reform through the work of Teresa of Avila in Spain which led to the establishment of a reformed branch of the order, namely the discalced Carmelites.

Teresa emphasised:

- Inner prayer as friendship with God
- A revival of the hermit character
- Living in seclusion



- Small communities of max 21 sisters
- Strict poverty

Sources of the Carmelite spirituality

- The prophet Elia as spiritual father (1 Kings 19:10)
- The book of “The First monks” by Philippe Ribot (1370), the so called spiritual rules of the Carmelites
- Veneration of Mary: the first hermit church was already dedicated to Mary, Mother of God; the name of the order therefore relates to Mary. By wearing the scapular, originating from Simon Stock, one expresses both love for Mary and the readiness to strive for virtues such as hers.
- Works of St Teresa of Avila (28.3.1515 - 4.10.1582)
- Works of St John of the Cross (1542 – 1591)
- Works of St Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)
- Works of St T. Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein, 1891-1942)



Our life – our community

1. Living in friendship with God

As followers of Christ, who tarried on the mountain in prayer and whose life was blessed with trustful relationship with God, we know that we have been taken into this relationship between Jesus and God. This relationship expresses itself in prayerful presence before God and in friendship with Jesus Christ.



There are various forms of prayer:

- The liturgical prayer, the hours that are prayed with the rest of the world. The liturgy distinguishes itself by sobriety and ample room for silence.
- The personal inner prayer (meditation) is the focus of daily life and two hours are dedicated to it. One in the morning and one in the afternoon. The structure of the day which continuously calls the sisters to prayer, reminds them to follow their desire to “meditate day and night on the Lord’s will and to keep watch in prayer”, to live in the presence of God and allow themselves to be transformed by him.

Daily timetable in our community

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|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 6.00 | Laudes, Terz |
| 6.30 | Breakfast |
| 7.00 | Meditation |
| 8.00 | Holy Mass |
| 9.00-11.00 | Work |
| 11.15 | Sext, Non, examination of conscience |
| 11.45 | Lunch |
| 13.00 | Free time |
| 13.30 | Spiritual reading |
| 14.30 | Work |
| 16.30 | Meditation |
| 17.30 | Vespers |
| 18.00 | Dinner |
| 19.00 | Recreation |
| 19.30 | Komplet |
| 20.00 | Time of seclusion in one`s cell |
| 21.00 | Matins |
| 22.00 | Sleep |

2. Living in loving regard – Silence

Life in God’s presence is a school of loving regard of God’s word. This requires an atmosphere of peace and silence. Outward stillness reveals the troubles of the heart and invites the person, in the silence of their heart and their own thoughts, to meet God within themselves.



3. Living in solitude and community

Each sister has her own cell in which she should stay while she is not occupied with work. It is a room of solitude and encounter with God. Besides this hermit element there is the life in a community with its daily demands.



4. Living in the rhythm of prayer, spiritual reading and work

The Carmelites don’t define themselves through their work, but rather through the way they do their work: everything they do is for Christ, out of love and in the presence of God. The following departments work towards our sustenance:



- Host bakery
- Candle making
- Book delivery
- Edith Stein Archive
- Guest house for people who seek silence.

In order to gradually achieve this loving attitude and remain in prayer, the day passes between prayer, work and spiritual reading.

5. Living in accordance with the gospel

Following Christ finds its expression in a life based on 3 evangelical councils: a celibate life for the Kingdom, poverty and obedience. In order to prepare for a lifelong commitment to this way of life there are 6 years of probation:

- 3 months as an aspirant
- 1 year as a postulant
- 2 years as a novice
- 3 years temporary vows



6. Living and remaining in one place – features of the Cologne Carmelite convent

- Choral
- Veneration of the queen of peace
- Prayer for peace
- Saint T. Benedicta of the cross (Edith Stein) and the Jewish-Christian dialogue

Currently there are 21 sisters in our community aged between 32 and 95 years.

Further information:

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