

## ASSOCIATE PILGRIMAGE:

# A transformative experience

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Pilgrims resting at birthplace of Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger, Stadtamhof, Germany.

**W**e gathered as strangers at O'Hare International Airport, 14 associates, one sister and two family members from two provinces, and eight states. We quickly created a community by praying, laughing, sharing, eating and helping each other along the way as we journeyed across Germany.

Being able to walk in the footsteps of Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger of Jesus was a moving experiencing for each of us. Some of those moments were:

- Walking on the stone bridge across the Danube to the birth place of Blessed Theresa in Stadtamhof;
- Being in Theresa's bedroom at Neunburg vorm Wald where we saw how short her bed was and how small the trunk was that she used to travel to America;
- Hearing the children play in the garden of the Neunburg vorm Wald school, being in awe at how the legacy continues 185 years later;
- Praying at Blessed Theresa's tomb at the Munich motherhouse.



It was our day at the Munich Motherhouse, that touched us the most. We were able to connect with 18 German associates from Westphalia (northwestern Germany) and Bavaria (southeastern Germany), spending the entire day together. What a blessing it was to learn that as associates or *weggemeinschaft* (Companions on the Way) we share similar relationships, hopes and challenges in response to our call to live out the SSND charism and extending that spirit into service for God's people. At the end of the day the sisters and associates prayed Vespers, alternating between English and German. We experienced the gift of our internationality when the associates renewed our covenant at the tomb of Blessed Theresa and the sisters accepted our renewal in German.

We truly felt blessed by the hospitality shown by all the SSNDs, both sisters and companions on the way during this transformative pilgrimage to the roots of our congregation.

Visit the Bavarian Province website to learn more about the International Meeting of *Weggemeinschaft*: <http://bit.ly/newslink-the-way> □