

**CELEBRATION OF FOUNDATION DAY
SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME OF COESFELD, GERMANY
OCTOBER 1**



Today, October 1, we celebrate Foundation Day for the Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld, Germany. On October 1, 1850, **Hilligonde Wolbring** and **Elisabeth Kühling** became novices as Sisters of Notre Dame. Hilligonde took the religious name Sister Maria Aloysia and Elisabeth became Sister Maria Ignatia. At the time, they did not know that through their commitment, our good and provident God was actually bringing into existence a new congregation of sisters blessed with special gifts of love for the benefit of all people.

This congregation, the Sisters of Notre Dame, had a team of people involved in its creation. Although **Saint Julie Billiart** and **Father Bernard Overberg** were already dead by 1850, they had a profound influence on the two young sisters. The experience of God's goodness and love for the poor that Saint Julie had was passed down to Hilligonde and Elisabeth as they learned how to become sisters from some of St. Julie's sisters. Father Bernard Overberg developed an educational philosophy based on the strong belief in the value of each person. Hilligonde and Elisabeth learned Father Overberg's philosophy when they studied to become teachers. **Father Theodor Elting** was the parish priest who helped guide Hilligonde and Elisabeth as they followed their dream of helping poor children and starting a congregation of religious sisters. These influences are the foundation for the spirituality and ministry Sister Maria Aloysia and Sister Maria Ignatia would live themselves and share with all the other women who would join them over the next 164 years.

With gratitude to God, we pray...

God, you gifted Sister Maria Aloysia with a trusting love for you, so that she would do whatever you asked of her, as she carried out her work of teaching and caring for neglected children.

Give all of us the grace of really listening to you as we respond to the needs of the poor, the disadvantaged and those on the margins of society in our own time.

God, you gifted Sister Maria Ignatia with a deep life of prayer and love and through her led many young women to become close to you as Sisters of Notre Dame.

Help all of us to learn to pray better and develop a special friendship with you.

God, you gave Saint Julie Billiart such a special experience of your loving goodness that she would often exclaim "How good is the good God".

Help us to see your goodness all around us and show gratitude to you for all we have received.

God, you gave Father Bernard Overberg a great belief in the dignity of every human being as an image of yourself, our loving Creator.

Help us to use our unique gifts to live fully human lives and help others realize their gifts in their own lives.

God, you gave Father Theodor Elting a clear vision of how these two women fit into the Church's mission in the religious, social and political conditions of the time.

Help us to understand our mission, our role, in our families, our school, the church and the world today.

Amen.