

Federation chapter of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Lioba in Freiburg/Germany



The Benedictine Sisters of St. Lioba are a Benedictine sisters' federation that was found by Maria Föhrenbach in Freiburg-Günterstal/Germany as response after the first World War.

From 16th to 19th October 2021, nine Lioba Sisters from the Priors of Freiburg/Germany, Copenhagen/Denmark, Bhopal/India, and St. Johann b.H./Austria met for their (biannual) federation chapter in Freiburg. Mischa Altmann and myself hosted the whole meeting. Because of the pandemic the last meeting had been three years ago. All Covid-19 restrictions were followed to



allow the long due gathering in person. Each of the four priories of the Federation sent a report in advance as usual, covering the period since the last Chapter of the Federation (2018). What was new was to read all reports before the chapter to advance faster and to place these under an additional guiding question, namely: **"What is particularly moving us as a community in the Priory?"**.

At the beginning there was a lot of time for a slow arrival, that the sisters, who had not seen each other for a long time or don't know, could join in/reconnect with each other. A kind of team building process went along with the gathering throughout these days. The four priories and the delegates of the convents reported the significant highlights and key experiences with successes and hindrances from in their countries. In a careful approach, the





Lioba Sisters looked beyond the mere reporting figures of the convents. The priories exchanged burning questions and trusted to share the future challenges they are all in. They also mentioned difficult big topic like: shrinking numbers of sisters (few admissions), general mistrust from people against the catholic church, or monastic structures and rules that follow old traditions that don't serve their religious purpose anymore.

The unanimous decision was taken that the following five topics / questions are so important that they should be further dealt with in the Federation, in each priory and in the convents:

- What is the role /gift of the federation of Benedictine Sisters of St. Lioba?
- How do we want to communicate as a family?
- How do we deal with aging and shrinking priories?
- How do we promote healthy relationships - individually and in the community?
- How do we put in practice our responsibility for the Creation in our priories?

The Lioba Sisters deepened their understanding of the multiple characteristics of the four priories - like cultural distinctions, socioeconomic problems, understanding of rules and politics of the national church, religious traditions etc. A practical insight has been how important professional translation is for a good cooperation in three different languages with diverse cultures. The Benedictine Sisters of St. Lioba could solve misunderstandings from the past and



now build stronger on the richness of their diversity and resources. A sister summed up this process: "Bringing together different cultures, experiences, different ways of thinking and arguing makes the really common appear - almost a spiritual experience...".