

Interview with Sister M. Bernadette

1. Out of the various places you experienced on the Motherhouse grounds, what was your favorite and why?

My favorite place to visit was definitely the St. George chapel. I suppose it was because I felt the closest to Mother M. Anselma there. I wanted to linger there in hopes that as I prayed where she once prayed, the Lord would shape me more into our foundress' likeness of the Son!

2. Visiting the foundation is a privileged experience of the foundress. How did your knowledge of Mother M. Anselma deepen during your time here?

Since the experience is still alive in my memory, I am still deepening my knowledge of Mother M. Anselma. I go back to Thuine in my heart and ponder here in the present moment (in the US) the fact that while I was there, I was caught by surprise by the deep and striking impression Thuine had on me: it was really like coming home for the first time to the place where I was born! Or at least the place where the seeds which sprang me into myself as a *Thuine Franciscan* were once planted. I experienced Mother M. Anselma as *mother*, and while I was there, I was at rest as a daughter in a profound way. Nothing was insignificant. From meals with each of the sisters at the Motherhouse, the visit to the Provincial house in Schwagstorf or any trip I made to a daughter house (Denekamp, Heede, St. Elizabeth *Krankenhaus*, St. Francis of Assisi School in Osnabruck), and even to any traipsing about on the Motherhouse grounds or the nearby roads, it was all so full of meaning and it was shaping me as I stayed. Everything was full of meaning and leaving deep impressions on me as I experienced it.

I was probably most "surprised" on the day that I found myself in the boys' boarding school at lunch with our sisters who still take care of those boys today. I was caught up in wonder at just how lasting and living the impact our foundress' *ever ready* heart was! Could she ever have imagined that her yes to the Lord would take shape as it has?! I was also delighted that *our* religious vocation took shape in this way, creating such a path of adventure for the sisters who would follow in Mother M. Anselma's footsteps. That just might be another word that struck me about meeting Mother M. Anselma while I was in Thuine: adventure. She was a woman ever ready for the adventure of obedience, always listening to God in the concrete surroundings, ready to see signs of God's grace present in everything. She trusted He would communicate with her. Nothing could keep her from listening in faith to the Lord who she trusted would speak, whether in words or in events. It opens up a new horizon in my own heart as I ponder the possibilities for those of us who still follow in her footsteps and seek to take refuge in the Heart of Jesus and heed the desires and gifts of His humble, Sacred Heart. Nothing is an obstacle for the Lord that Mother M. Anselma knew; nothing is an obstacle for Our Lord! Everything he permits becomes a path...even when it seems to be effacing the path one was initially walking along.

3. What did you find most surprising and why?

I found a sense of home to be what was most surprising, and this is because I was far from "home" in the USA and surrounded by sisters most of whom did not speak English, but right there in the chapel and kitchen and refectory I was totally myself with them.

4. What did you find most familiar and why?

The time we shared in the chapel and refectory gave me the most sense of familiarity: beginning the day with liturgy and especially Holy Mass, having an Adoration Chapel, the Common Cross Prayer, morning and afternoon break, and the way my room and place at table were prepared with that Thuine Franciscan touch. These are such lovely experiences to be able to call familiar!

5. If you were to describe your experience in one word or phrase, what would it be?

The Source...

**6. You will be returning to the U.S. as novice director. What will you bring to the novitiate?
How will this experience help you in your new role?**

Here I am writing as the current novice director, still feeling a bit like I'm dreaming, but Thuine and everything this means to me is right here in the novitiate of Alton, IL with me. I actually asked the Lord to give me "large arms" when I was in Thuine so I could "carry home" all that he had done and given. Thuine was the apex of the year that I was given to study and be deepened in Spirituality. While it was a journey that took me from Alton to Rome to Assisi and finally to Thuine, the fruits of this journey are not stuck in these places, because these places are with me as the path by which I have been put into touch with the Source of all that is! I hope to live from The Source and mostly by witness reflect to our youngest members that "If anyone is thirsty..." she can come and drink deeply from the Source who is waiting to slake our thirst for more.