



Obituary

Sr Marie-Christopher Wehner OP

15.03.1943 - 11.08.2024



*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.
You are my friends if you do what I command you.
I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing.
I have called you friends.
Jn 15:13-15*

Sr. Marie-Christopher was born in Würzburg on 15 March 1943, two years after her sister Ursula, to Rudolf and Therese Wehner, and was christened Christel Adele. She grew up in Würzburg and, thanks to a long stay with her grandparents in Hammelburg, she and her family were spared the night of the bombing of Würzburg on 16 March 1945. After her father returned from the war in 1948, her siblings Herta and Martin were born.

After primary school, she attended the Ursuline Sisters' grammar school in Würzburg from 1953 to 1959 and graduated with an intermediate school leaving certificate. She then worked for four and a half years at the KBA, the Catholic Library Association in Würzburg.

One of her aunts was a religious with the Sisters of St Vincent and she experienced a lot of joy with her. 'That's heaven,' is how Marie-Chris experienced being with her aunt Rosa as a child, and that's how she wanted to be.

Through her work with young people at the Volkersberg, she got to know the Dominican Sisters of Oakford in Neustadt. And she was touched by the sentence 'I have called you by name' from Isaiah 43, which the then youth pastor Wilhelm Heinz quoted. She felt that it was meant for her, personally.

So, in 1964, at the age of 21, she went to Neustadt. There she met Sr Yvonne with her "strappy shoes" and felt she was in the right place, as she told me with a smile. Her family was very surprised when she entered the convent. Not only was she the prettiest, but also the most spirited of the siblings, so they told me. Even though she was the first to leave home, she always remained close to her family and maintained lively contact with the members of the extended family. Her two younger siblings also accompanied her in the last months and weeks of her illness. Their children and grandchildren visited her and presented her with pictures they had painted themselves, with which she was very happy.

She spent her postulancy and novitiate in Neustadt. On 1 November 1966 she made her first profession.

From 1966-69 she studied catechesis and pastoral care at the Higher Technical College in Munich. After successfully completing her studies, she was transferred to Oakford, South Africa, in 1969, where she worked in youth work for six years. During this time, she made her final profession there on 9 January 1971.

From 1975 to 1977 she studied in Rome and obtained her diploma in theology. From 1977 to 1980, she was in charge of the novitiate in South Africa. In 1980, she returned to Germany: first to Volkersberg for four years until 1984. She then spent 24 years in Diessen am Ammersee, where she taught religion at the Congregation's girls' secondary school.

Sr Marie-Christopher took a sabbatical in California before returning to Volkersberg in 2010 for three years, where she worked in parish pastoral care in Bad Brückenau. From 2013, she lived in Neustadt and worked in the Marktheidenfeld parish community as a pastoral worker ministering to the elderly in the various nursing homes. In January 2023, she moved to Kist with the other Sisters of the community and was again involved in pastoral care there.

She was pleased to be close to Würzburg, her home town, and it suited her because she could now travel there without much effort.

From autumn 2023, she experienced increasing health problems, culminating in a diagnosis of cancer in March 2024. She had already been diagnosed with cancer in 2004, but had responded well to medical treatment. This cancer had now broken out again and Sr Marie-Chris decided against further stressful treatments. At Easter 2024, she returned from hospital to the senior citizens' residence and prepared herself for her death, for which she was ready.

The constant physical deterioration during the last months was difficult for her, but she remained mentally and spiritually alert for a long time. It was important to her to have Sr Uta read the Gospel of the day to her every day and to discuss it with her.

She also had the final paper she wrote in English at the end of her studies in Rome in 1977 read to her. It is entitled: 'Catherine of Siena - obedient to the truth.' She tried to deepen her attitude of devotion to the truth and to what God demanded of her in the challenging phase of dying.

She longed for her going home to God and on Sunday morning, 11 August, God took her into his glory - surrounded by fellow Sisters in her home in Kist.

'Who am I?' She asked herself this question several times in the last few weeks. She was aware that the stations and facts here mentioned are only the framework for a life that was characterised by joy and hope, by sadness and fear, by highs and lows, by longing and fulfilment, by loneliness and lively and loving encounters.

'Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you' - these words of Peter (John 21:17) were her answer to herself. Being a lover and proclaiming the love of God was what she called her mission and hope, which she associated with her life as a Dominican. This is how she was also perceived by people who remember her as a very loving and motherly woman, who had an open heart and an open ear for people and who held them in high esteem. People experienced her as very present and sensitive, as well as reliable and loyal.

When we discussed her obituary, which she wanted to be kept short, I asked her what she wanted people to remember about her. Her answer was: firstly, as her name Christopher (Christ bearer) suggests, that every person experience that they are loved and carried by Christ, and that they may carry Christ and his love further. Secondly: to remain a lifelong learner in the Dominican sense.

She remained a learner and seeker until the end of her life.

May you now have found eternal truth and love,
dear Sr Marie-Chris!

RIP