



## Blessed Mary of the Apostles

### First Superior General of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior

Therese von Wüllenweber was born in Castle Myllendonk, Mönchengladbach, Germany, on February 19, 1833. She went to the boarding school of the Benedictine Sisters in Liège, Belgium, from 1848 to 1850. She attended Jesuit inspired parish missions in 1853 and 1857 and took part in a retreat in 1856; these made a great impression on her and fired her with a missionary vocation.

In an attempt to clarify her vocation in 1857, she entered the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Bloemendaal, Netherlands. However, she left the order in March, 1863, unable to commit herself to a congregation whose main purpose was education.

In further attempts to try her vocation, she spent short periods with the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and the Visitation Sisters. In 1875, in the presence of her spiritual director Dr. von Essen, she made a private vow committing herself to the missions. In part of a former convent in Neuwerk, Germany, she cared for orphans and gave older women the opportunity to live a common life. However, it remained difficult for her to fully realize her vocation and she continued to search for a missionary community.

On April 25, 1882, she answered an advertisement placed by Father Bonaventura Lüthen for the Apostolic Teaching Society. The founder, Father Francis Jordan, visited her on July 4, 1882, and stayed for three days. He made a deep impression on her and on September 5, 1882, she became the first female member of the First Degree of the Apostolic Teaching Society.

In 1883 Father Jordan established a group of sisters in Rome but asked Mother Mary to remain in Neuwerk as a sister of the Catholic Teaching Society. However, problems occurred with the sisters in Rome and on October 13, 1885, they were separated from Father Jordan; they continue today as the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

In 1888 Father Jordan called Mother Mary to Rome. He found a house for the sisters in Tivoli and on December 8, 1888, she and two others received the habit from Father Jordan. On March 25, 1889, she made perpetual vows in the Sisters of the Catholic Teaching Society and was appointed superior. In December, 1890, three sisters were sent to the first mission of the Society in Assam, India. By the end of 1892 there were about 50 sisters and novices in the house in Tivoli and they were being sent out to many different parts of the world.

In 1894 a typhus epidemic broke out in Tivoli and seven sisters died; this finally prompted the move to Rome. Mother Mary of the Apostles was unanimously elected as superior general at the first general chapter of the Sisters of the Divine Savior in 1905. She died on December 25, 1907, after a short illness.

In recognition of her personal virtues, trust in divine providence, and commitment to the missions, she was beatified on October 13, 1968. Her feast day is September 5.