

Bl. Maria Euthymia Uffing
(Germany) 1914-1955
*Graduated with distinction from nursing program
on 3 September 1939.*
*World War II - Cared for prisoners of war and
foreign workers with infectious diseases.¹*



Emma Uffing² was born on April 8, 1914, in Halverde, Germany, to August Uffing and his second wife, Maria Schnitt. She was baptized on that same day. Emma was the fifth of seven children. Her parents were farmers in a small German town. When she was 18 months old, she contracted rickets, the effects of which would impact her the rest of her life.

Emma attended elementary school in Halverde and found learning difficult. However, her grades were consistently good. She helped in the kitchen and on the family farm always stating, “I can do that, I can do that.” At the age of 14 she expressed a desire to be a nun to her mother who stated that she was too young to make this decision. In November 1931 at the age of 17 she went to work at St. Anna Hospital in Hopsten in the house and on the poultry farm. For a year she worked as a cook. There she met the matron, Sister Euthymia Linnenkemper, a Clemens sister who became her role model.

On July 23, 1934, she entered the Sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity (Sisters of St. Clemens) in Munster, together with 46 other women and took the name, Sister Euthymia after the Hopsten supervisor. She was the 2,638th woman to enter the order taking the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Forty people from her home town attended her clothing ceremony, a sign of their appreciation of her.

Sister Euthymia made her temporary vows on October 11, 1936. She was assigned to work at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Dinslaken, Germany, in October 1936 on the Lower Rhine. She subsequently began nursing training at the School of Nursing at the Raphaelsklink in Münster, founded in 1909 and directed by the Clemens Sisters.³ She found that learning the extensive specialist knowledge was difficult for her, but through perseverance she managed to be successful. She initially worked in the women’s ward and then after a year took over the isolation ward. The isolation ward consisted of a wooden barracks with 50 beds. She provided much love and brought happiness to the patients, especially the many children who were without their mothers. On September 3, 1939, Sister Euthymia passed the state-approved nurse exam³ with the grade of “very good.” On September 15, 1940, she made her final vows at the motherhouse in Munster, and she thereby committed herself to the order of the Sisters of Clemens for her entire life.

During World War II (1938-1945), Sister Euthymia cared for the contagiously ill prisoners of war and forced laborers. Conditions included: scabies, erythema, typhus, venereal diseases, pulmonary tuberculosis. They usually arrived dirty and infested with lice. She was not repulsed by pus, blood, sputum or feces. She lovingly cared for over 70 patients housed in the St. Barbara barracks. The patients called her the “Angel of Love.” On March 23, 1945, when 85% of Dinslaken was destroyed in an American bombing raid, including St. Vincent’s Hospital, she helped transport the patients to the surrounding villages until late at night. The next day she collapsed with a high fever.

After the hospital was rebuilt, she was assigned to work in the laundry room. Desiring to remain in direct nursing care she was saddened by this decision of her supervisors but quickly recovered with an attitude to be “ready for anything.” On January 14, 1948, she was transferred to Munster and took over the management of the laundry in the motherhouse and the Raphael Clinic. She was responsible to clean not only the dirty laundry for the clinic but also the parent company and its affiliated facilities. It was hard and monotonous work. However, she still took time to assist the other sisters with their duties.

She collapsed in the wash house on July 8, 1955, and was taken to the infirmary. Taken to surgery, it is found she had advanced incurable cancer. The doctors were shocked at the stamina of this “laundress.” Her pain had to be severe considering the extent of disease. In August 1955, she developed a fever and asked for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. One nurse recalled, “It was hard to see how much she was suffering.”² On September 9, 1955, at 6:00 a.m., Sister Maria Euthymia received Viaticum. At 7:30 a.m. she died at the age of only 41. At the same moment the sun shined through the window and illuminated her face – then the weather remained cloudy the rest of the day. Crowds of the sick, nurses, students, employees and visitors flocked to the mortuary chapel where Sister Euthymia was laid out. She was not only prayed for but people immediately began asking for her intercession. Before she died, she had promised others that she would pray to God for them.

On September 10, 1955, a miracle attributed to her intercession occurred. A sister, Sister M. Avelline, who suffered severe burns and bruises when her hand got caught between the rollers of an ironing machine, asked for the intercession of Sister Maria Euthymia at her open coffin. The sister’s hand was healed within a very short time. The doctors found this medically unexplainable.

The beatification process was begun at the end of 1959 by the Bishop of Munster, Dr. Michael Keller, four years after her death. Blessed Maria Euthymia Uffing was declared venerable with the promulgation of the decree of heroic virtue on September 1, 1988. In March of 2000 Rome accepted the miraculous cure of Sister M. Avelline. Sister Maria Euthymia Uffing was beatified on October 7, 2001⁴ both by Pope St. John Paul II.(Memorial - September 9).

References:

- 1) "Blessed Maria Euthymia Üffing". CatholicSaints.Info. 9 September 2017. Web. 8 December 2021. <<https://catholicsaints.info/blessed-maria-euthymia-uffing/>>
- 2) Clemens Sisters. Biography Sr. M. Euthymia. Accessed 14 April 2022. <https://www.clemensschwwestern.de/euthymia/biografie/>
- 3) Personal Communication with Sister Elisabethis Lenfers, Euthymia Center, Munster, Germany. 17 June 2022.
- 4) Hagiography Circle: An Online Resource on Contemporary Hagiography. 1941. 24) Elisa Angela Meneguzzi (Liduina). Accessed 12 April 2022. <http://newsaints.faithweb.com/year/1941.htm>

Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.cicams.org / www.nacn-usa.org): *to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls.* May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka