



1925-2025

**ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL
TSINAN, CHINA
SHANTUNG.**

若瑟醫院
濟南經一路緯五路



Hospital Sisters of St. Francis

**Part 1 of 2
September 8, 2025**

September 8, 2025

Part 1: The Founding of the China Mission

September 22, 2025

Part 2: The China Mission from 1926-48
American and Chinese Sisters
1948-present



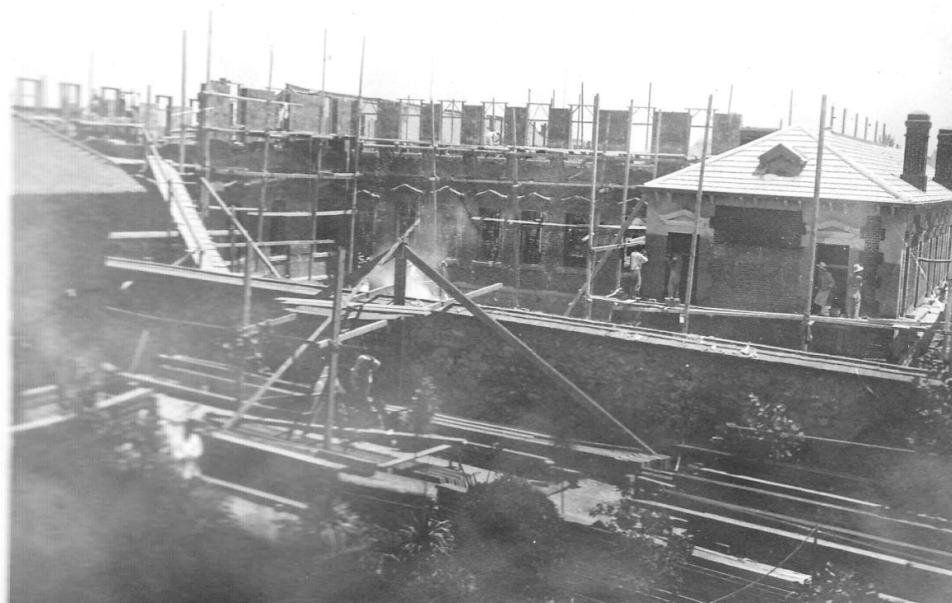
In 1923, Bishop Adalbert Schmuecker, OFM, Diocese of Tsinan, China, (left) and Reverend Alphonse Schnusenberg, OFM, (center/left) visited the United States to solicit aid for the Chinese people. They presented their petition to Reverend Monsignor Joseph Straub, Priest Director of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis (center/right), and Reverend Mother Marcianna, Provincial Superior (right), Springfield, Illinois. The Sisters believed that establishing a mission in China would be in thanksgiving to God for their 50 years in America. They recognized that good medical care was essential for the missionaries and that it would be of value to the Church if these missionaries could be nursed back to health.

Monsignor Straub traveled to China to study the conditions and decide where the proposed hospital should be built. He visited Tsinan, the capital of Shantung – a city of approximately 400,000 inhabitants (which is said to be 1,000 years older than Christianity). Connected by canal to the Yellow River, it has access to the coast, and railroads meet there, making it an important commercial center. The Episcopal residence of the Vicariate of Tsinan has been there, which was acquired



by the Jesuits during the 17th century. This property had been confiscated by the government in 1790 and was returned 70 years later to the Church. The Italian Franciscans worked there until 1904, when the Society for the Propagation of Faith gave it to the North German Franciscans of the Holy Cross Province. At this historic place, Monsignor Straub chose to found the new mission. **(Monsignor Joseph Straub: born November 4, 1873; ordained June 11, 1898; HSOSF priest director 1905-36; died June 10, 1936.)**

In the spring of 1925, ground was broken for St. Joseph's Hospital and Dispensary in the village of Wu-li-kou, in the western suburb Ulikou. This building was believed to be the first organized modern hospital ever established by American Sisters in China. Because available space was limited, a three-story brick building was erected, foreign in style. It had running water, electric lights, and other modern facilities.



When the hospital was under construction, attention was directed to the selection of the Sisters to be missionaries in China. The request for volunteers stipulated that applicants be in good health and no more than 40 years old. 67 Sisters responded

Volunteers for China

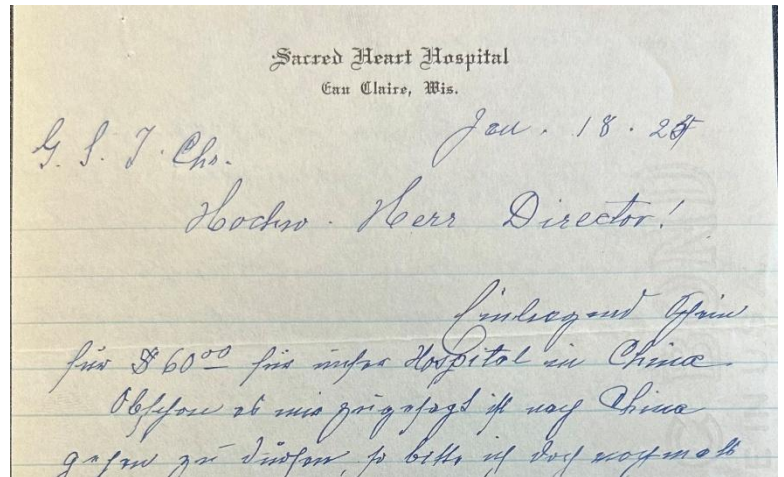
1. Sr. Wilhelma.....E.Cl.....Garden X	37. Sr. Valeriana.....G.B.....?
2. Sr. Augustine*....".....Phar.	38. Sr. Adelheid.....".....Nurse
3. Sr. Magdalene*....St.J's.....Nurse & Scl.	39. Sr. Boromea.....Chip.....Nurse
4. Sr. Octavia.....Streator...O.R. X	40. Sr. Charlotte*....St.J's.....O.R.
5. Sr. Engelberth....St.J's.....Nurse X	41. Sr. Aurea.....*....St.J's.....Office
6. Sr. Irenae.....E.Cl.....Nurse	42. Sr. Evarista.....Chip.....Nurse
7. Sr. Carolige.....E.Cl.....Laundry	43. Sr. Agidia.....Chip.....
8. Sr. Meinulpha.....".....In Charge-nurse	44. Sr. Cypriana.....Litch.....Nurse
9. Sr. Leona*.....".....Office	45. Sr. Honoria.....*....Litch.....
10. Sr. Ermina.....".....Nurse	46. Sr. Albina.....Litch.....Nurse
11. Sr. Ernestine*....Bellv.....O.R.	47. Sr. Angeline * Bellv. O.R.
12. Sr. Rosalia*.....Streator...O.R.	
13. Sr. Bonavita.....".....Kitchen	
14. Sr. Marcella*.....".....Nurse	
15. Sr. Patrocla.....Chip. Nurse in charge.	
16. Sr. Clementia*....".....O.R.	
17. Sr. Ferdinandina...".....Nurse	
18. Sr. Euphrosina...".....Kitchen	
19. Sr. Carola.....".....Nurse	
20. Sr. Clarissa*.....E.Cl.....Diet Kitchen.	
21. Sr. Calista.....Litch.....Superior	
22. Sr. Hermina*.....Chip.....Lab & X-Ray	
23. Sr. Agnella*.....E.C.L.....School & Nurse	
24. Sr. Marcellina....St.J's.....Head Nurse	
25. Sr. Nicasia.....St.J's.....Serv. K.	
26. Sr. Solana.....St.J's.....Nurse	
27. Sr. Rita.....*....Highland...Laundry	
28. Sr. Venantia.....St.J's.....Record O.	
29. Sr. Leocadia.....St.J's.....Childrens D.	
30. Sr. Januaria.....St.J's.....Head Nurse	
31. Sr. Theophila.....St.J's.....Diet K.	
32. Sr. Eligia.....Streator...Nurse	
33. Sr. Theodosia.....".....Head Nurse	
34. Sr. Vitalia.....".....X-R & Lab.	
35. Sr. Leontia.....Decatur...Kitchen	
36. Sr. Leo.....*....Litchfield.O.R.	
37. Sr. Donatia*.....Effing.....O.R.	
38. Sr. Gerburgis.....".....Nurse	
39. Sr. Evangelista*..Decatur...Dressing R.	
40. Sr. Romana.....".....Nurse	
41. Sr. Salesia.....Effingham..Superior	
42. Sr. Pasilia*.....St. J's....Nurse	
43. Sr. Margaret.....Decatur...Head Nurse	
44. Sr. Constantia....St.J's.....Nurse	
45. Sr. Gerolda.....Litch.....X-R & Lab.	
46. Sr. Seraphina.....Streator...Kitchen	
47. Sr. Theonilla*....Sheboygan..O.R.	
48. Sr. Edmunda.....".....Nurse	
49. Sr. Alfreda.....".....Kitchen	
50. Sr. Armella*.....G.B.....Nurse	
51. Sr. Bertholda.....".....Kitchen	
52. Sr. Benigna.....".....Nurse	
53. Sr. Angelica.....".....Lab. & Pharm.	
54. Sr. Otmara.....".....Nurse	
55. Sr. Gregoria.....#.....O.R.	
56. Sr. Editha.....".....Nurse	

Five Sisters were chosen.

Sister Wilhelma Broeskamp, OSF (age 62)



"It is true that I am more than 40 years of age, and neither is my physical condition the best. I feel sure, however, that I am the right person to send to help establish this, our first mission in China, for I am old enough to encourage the Sisters and to provide for them and see that they get the proper care and food."



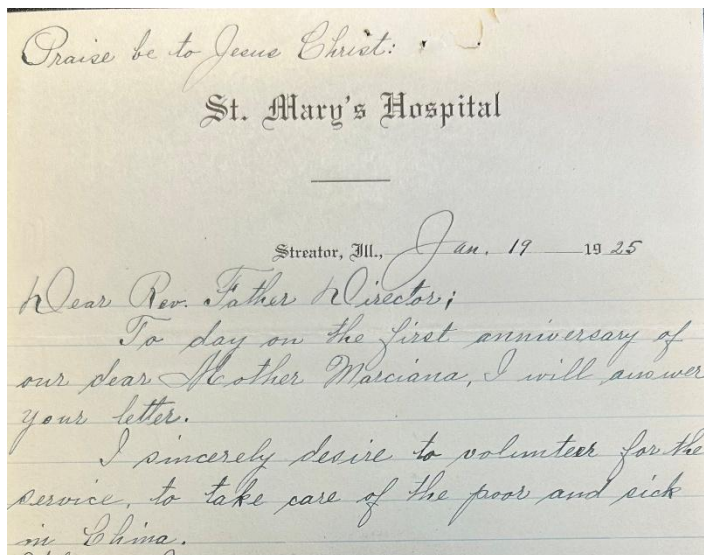
Born: Jan. 11, 1862, in Mettingen, Germany, and named Thersia
 Parents: Anton and Maria (Schulte) Broeskamp
 Entered: May 7, 1883
 Missionary to America: 1884
 1884 Decatur, IL
 First Profession: September 27, 1885
 1888 Springfield, IL/Green Bay, WI/Chippewa Falls, WI
 1889 Lincoln, IL/Springfield, IL
 1890 East St. Louis, IL - Superior
 1903 Decatur, IL
 1905 Eau Claire, WI (garden)
 1925 Tsinan, China - Superior
 Died: February 11, 1932, and buried in Garden of the Dead Cemetery (Hungkialou, China)

Sister Wilhelma

Sister Octavia Doernemann, OSF (age 46)



"It always has been, and still is, my heart's enjoyment to be among the poor and to do something for them. I love poor people."



Schw. Octavia

Born: February 15, 1878, in Osterfeld, Germany, and named Maria
Parents: Herman and Gertrud (Ortmann) Doernemann
Entered: October 6, 1899
First Profession: October 17, 1901
Missionary to America: 1902
1902 Lincoln, IL
1904 Sheboygan, WI
1906 Effingham, IL
1908 Springfield, IL
1909 Eau Claire, WI
1914 Springfield, IL
1921 Belleville, IL
1922 Streator, IL (surgery)
1925 Tsinan, China
1929 Springfield, IL
1945 Chippewa Falls, WI
1953 Springfield, IL
1965 Motherhouse (Springfield)
Died: March 2, 1969, and buried in Crucifixion Hill Cemetery
/Springfield



Sister Engelberta Beyer, OSF (age 39)



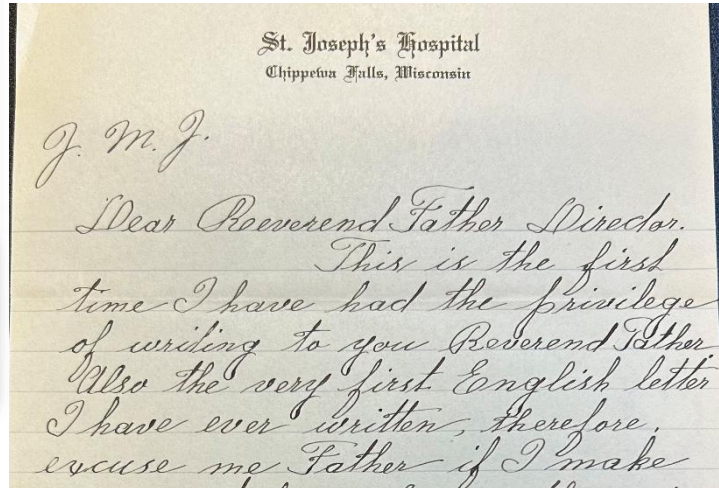
Born: May 30, 1885, in Raesfeld, Germany, and named Gertrud
Parents: Wilhelm and Franziska (Ostendorf) Beyer
Entered: May 12, 1905
Missionary to America: 1907
First Profession: November 18, 1907
1907 Decatur, IL
1910 Green Bay, WI
1912 Springfield, IL (nurse)
1925 Tsinan, China
Died: April 4, 1928, in China, and buried in Garden of the Dead
Cemetery (Hungkialou, China)

Schwester Engelbertha

Sister Euphrosine Fischer, OSF (age 30)



“...I leave it to you to decide whether I should go or not, but at the same time I feel able to bring this great sacrifice, may it cost what it will.”



Born: May 16, 1894, in Nordwalde, Germany, and named Johanna
Parents: Bernard and Henricka (Wenker) Fischer
Entered: May 1, 1914
Missionary to America: 1914
First Profession: November 9, 1916
1916 Chippewa Falls, WI
1919 Springfield, IL
1920 Streator, IL
1921 Springfield, IL
1922 Chippewa Falls, WI
1925 Tsinan, China
1948 Belleville, IL
1950 Litchfield, IL
1953 Motherhouse (Springfield)
1955 Litchfield, IL
1972 Motherhouse (Springfield)
Died: April 18, 1987, and buried in
Crucifixion Hill Cemetery/Springfield

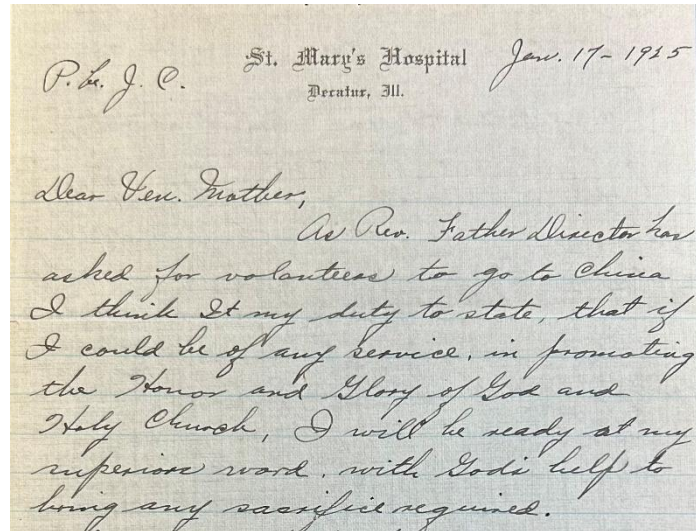


Sr. Euphrosine

Sister Evangelista Sanders, OSF (age 29)



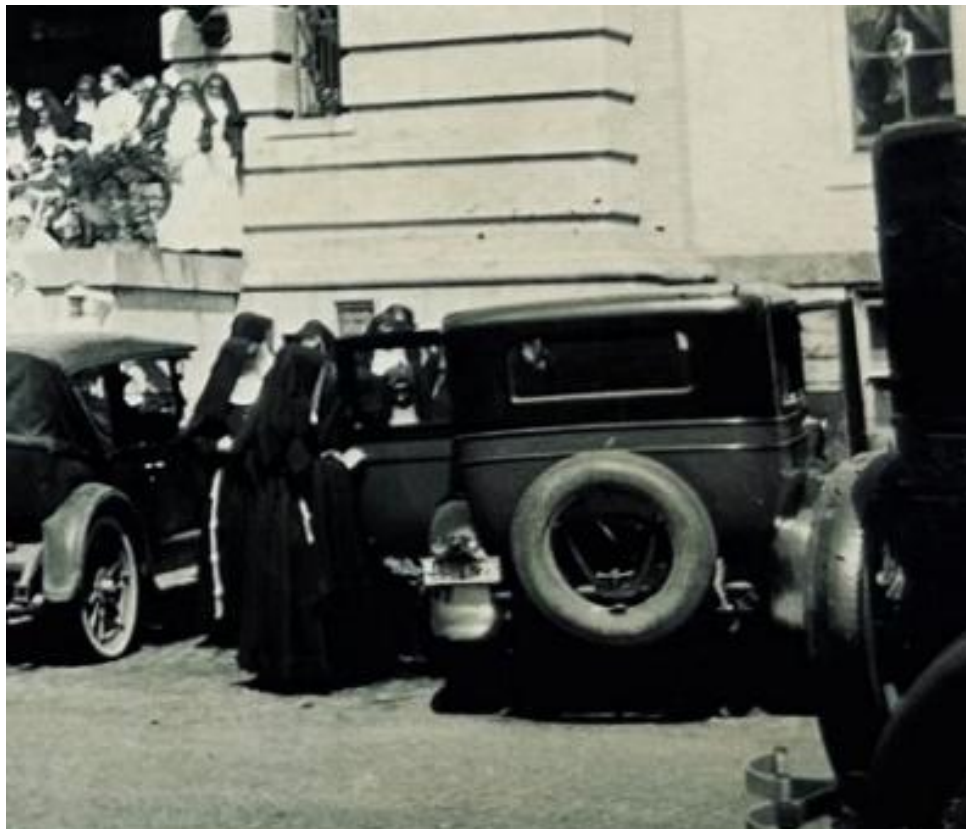
"For the love of God, I most willingly would share the labors and hardships and give a helping hand for the good cause."



Born: March 2, 1886, in Effingham, IL, and named Maria
Parents: Henry and Catharine (Feldhacke) Sanders
Entered: April 15, 1914
First Profession: November 9, 1916
1916 Springfield, IL
1917 Green Bay, WI
1920 Springfield, IL
1921 Streator, IL
1922 Springfield, IL/Decatur, IL (Dressing Room)
1925 Tsinan, China
Died: May 26, 1927, in China and buried in Garden of the Dead Cemetery (Hungkialou, China)

Sr. Evangelista

On September 8, 1925, the Sisters received their mission cross from Monsignor Straub. When the time of departure from St. John's Hospital came, great courage was needed, but the Sisters fully realized that what they hoped to accomplish outweighed all else.





Seated: Sister Evangelista and Sister Wilhelma; Standing: Sisters Engelberta, Euphrosine, and Octavia

Monsignor Straub and many Sisters accompanied the five missionaries to the train station and said goodbye. Father Alphonse, Mother Afra, Sister Nazaria, and Sister Josepha accompanied them on the train to Wisconsin. Several hours later, they arrived in Eau Claire, WI, and stayed a few days with the Sisters at Sacred Heart Hospital. Father Alphonse and the three Sisters returned to Springfield as the five missionaries took a train to St. Paul, MN, where they met their companions to China: Rev. Phillip Rittmeier, OFM, Rev. Emmanuel Behrend, OFM, Bertha Buehler, RN, and Antonette Kehres, RN.

The Diary of Sister Euphrosine Fischer, OSF (1925)

Canadian Pacific Train



In the year of our Lord 1925, Jubilee year of holy Mother Church and the 50th year of the founding of our Community in the United States, our higher Superiors, after much consideration, decided to open a mission hospital in China. Blessed be Jesus Christ

Dear Respected Father Director, Beloved Father in Christ,
It's about time to start talking about our journey; otherwise, we never will finish. Allow me, Your Reverend Father, to greet you with a long letter and try to make the content of the journey brief.

Since I write every day for something, but am often interrupted, and often it happens in a hurry, please overlook the poor writing and mistakes. As you might think, it's not easy to describe such a journey, but for you, I'd like to do so.

Now I'll get started on September 11, because everything that happened before today, Reverend Mother might have already told you. Also, the farewell in St. Paul wasn't humanly taken easy as one might think. We arrived the other morning in North Dakota and had a good night, so far so good. But now it's very chilly here, and the region is quite mountainous. Also, you see water everywhere with lots of ducks. Now we are at the train station in Bismarck, a quite big city. We missionaries are still in good spirits. Sister Evangelista and I are enjoying the food and sleeping a lot. When Sister Evangelista woke up this morning, she said, "Oh, let's go to bed earlier this evening again." Only Mother Wilhelma came way too early to wake us up. Also, Sister Octavia does careless things and gets sick. Pardon me to mention it – she already must use her spit bag.

September 12

Again, nature provides us with magnificent mountains. From time to time, you see a house. There doesn't seem to be much population in this region. At noon, we leave North Dakota and drive through Montana – a beautiful region, as you are familiar with. Now the beautiful sun makes yet another appearance, and it's getting warmer. Nature shows

the magnificent high mountains, which are magnificent to look at. High in the mountains, one sees the prettiest fir trees and thuja. Also, the valley here seems to be quite fertile, and Mother Wilhelma regrets she can't take the beautiful thujas with her. (For your burning longing, you might think what it'll be like in China.)

At 11 o'clock, we have already passed through the fourth tunnel – a magnificent region. Now the train travels through the high mountains and moves significantly slower. One says we are now through hell's gates and drive toward paradise. Watching through the window, one can barely look at the top; this is how high the mountains are, how great God is in nature! It's a pity that Sister Octavia can't share the joy with us; her condition doesn't allow it. We are all quite busy, so nothing escapes our gaze. Once we also travelled through a pretty flower park. One always says there are usually many wild animals in the mountains. I looked very closely but saw nothing, just very deep in the valley, and then saw a dead horse lying, an animal eating it up, but all in all, I saw nothing. Now we travel across Lake Pend Oreille, a large lake with lots of tiny ships. I counted 8, and amongst them a big one. After we crossed it, the water went out of our sight, and the high mountains appeared again. Also, in one section, the train drove very slowly. We've just been on the train's porch, where we often went, so nothing got lost. We were afraid of looking down into a very deep valley and moving on very slowly. Once again, we crossed through a tunnel and burst into laughter, seeing the teeny-tiny houses. Now allow me to say, Director, that we couldn't recognize each other on this day, being so dusty.

Once more, we passed a large field – corn, cabbage, and tomatoes – a lot of livestock meadows, I wish we could take a cow and already remarked about it. This evening, we left on the train at Tecoma and went a little up and down for half an hour. Travel continued at 6 o'clock. This is the last evening on the train. What does the future hold for us? We went to bed early and arose early Sunday morning.

September 13

We arrived in Seattle at 7 o'clock in the morning. Two Sisters from Maryknoll kindergarten picked us up. They told us to get into their truck and drove us through town. It was delightful to see, and I wish you could have seen it. After having Holy Mass, we were welcomed into their Refectory for coffee. Then we were taken to the nearby hospital, Providence Hospital of the Sisters of Charity. Here we had the most charming welcome and dined at its finest. We were honored to be let

inside their convent. What a solace for us - especially Sister Octavia. The Sisters were very good to us, and we owed them many thanks. Sister Engelberta, Sister Evangelista, and I did our laundry and put everything in good order again. We stayed here for three days and enjoyed it. Sister Conrad, who had celebrated her golden jubilee, took us to Seattle. This paper will hardly tell you what we saw here, so I will tell you, Very Reverend, when you come to China. We also went to the Motherhouse of those Sisters, a very large building, everything nicely decorated and furnished, and very monastic – similar to our TB Sanitorium. The Sisters and Reverend Mother guided us everywhere. The surrounding property was a flower park, and it was delightful.

This was the last evening before leaving Seattle, and we dined at the Maryknoll Sisters' convent. These Sisters were kind to us, and they prepared a large basket of food for our journey. The children performed plays for us. May the Lord bless the Sisters for their kindness.

September 16

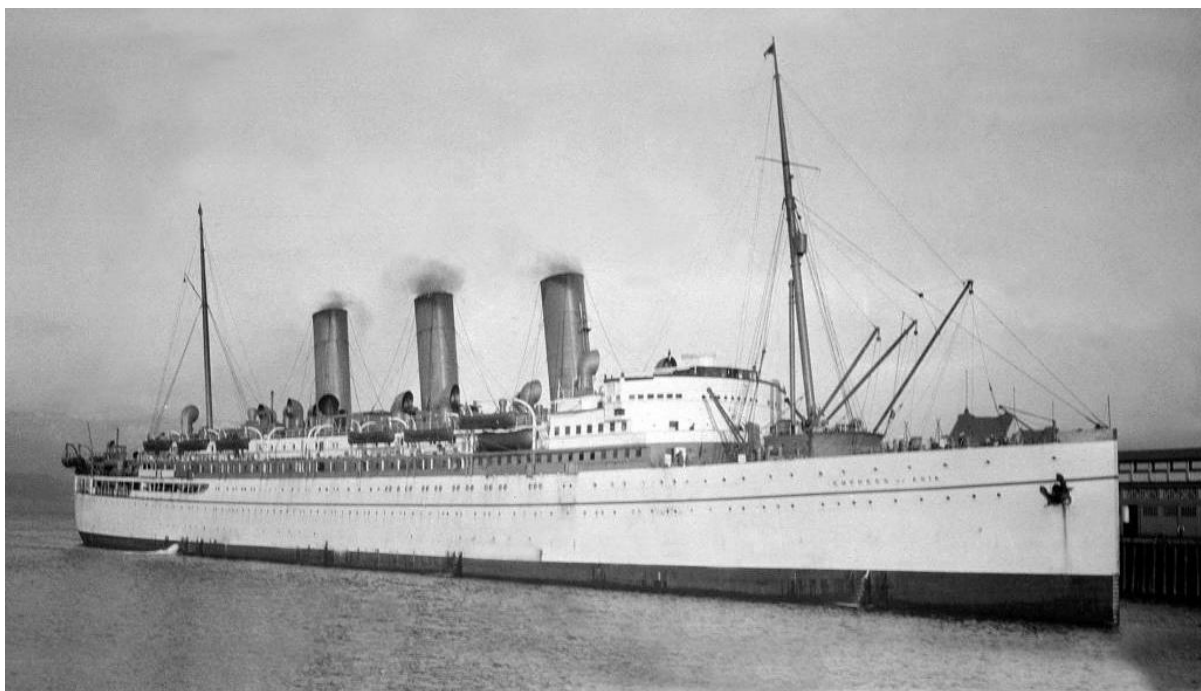
At 9 o'clock in the morning, we left Seattle. The Sisters brought us to the ocean and traveled on the *Princess Marguerite to Vancouver. On this boat, we rocked back and forth all day long, but we missionaries are ok. At 1 o'clock, the boat stopped for an hour in Victoria. I saw many tiny ships - I counted 15. Throughout the day, many seabirds flew around the boat, which Sister Evangelista found quite unpleasant. She thinks they look like bats and wishes they would stay in the water. She was scared that they might sit on her head.

(*Princess Marguerite was a Canadian coastal passenger train that operated along the west coast of British Columbia and into Puget Sound in Washington from 1925-99. It carried passengers and freight between Victoria, Vancouver, and Seattle.)

Finally, we arrived very tired and hungry in Vancouver. We left the ship with our baggage. It took approximately an hour until we cleared this station. At St. Paul's Hospital were the same Sisters as in Seattle, and we were warmly welcomed as earlier. We were taken to our sleeping quarters. After greeting the dear Lord, we went to the refectory. We two youngsters were so happy. Mother Wilhelma was honored to sleep in the bishop's bed; the others slept close to her. But my humble self had to go to the 3rd floor to a child's bed in a small, cute chamber. This is how we spent the night in Vancouver, and that's how Franciscans travel, don't they? Nothing was missing for us.

September 17

At 10 o'clock in the morning we had to leave the place that had become dear to us. This was the last time on land for a while. With motherly care, Mother Wilhelma walks ahead, and her order is: "Just look out for having your papers and all your things on you." Finally, we faced our big steamship. What a feeling, but we were full of joy and holy enthusiasm. We were glad that we were once and for all ready and greeted the dear God with a warm Deo Gratias. With burning longing that now our wish was fulfilled and nothing could stop us, we walked onto the ship. At noon, the horn sounded, music played, chains loosened, and slowly we left the beach. Adieu, Springfield. What will the future hold for us?



Empress of Asia (1913-1942)

Size: 570 ft. long

Propulsion: quadruple propellers, four steam turbines

Speed: 22 mph

Passengers: 400

Capacity:

200 1st class passengers

100 2nd class passengers

800 3rd class passengers

I admire Sister Evangelista, who stays quite calm despite all incidents and acts as if this experience is not the first time for her. I told her straight away, "Sister, let's go quickly on deck and seasickness won't be with us." But oh, dear, we were fooled. Well, Director, please don't be too concerned if I tell you the truth, but take everything in with common sense. The Sisters weren't fatally ill and enjoyed feeding the fish, especially Sister Octavia. Often, we joked about it, and Mother Wilhelma said, laughing, "It's a miserable world as you fall amid the rocking of this ship." I tried to keep joyful despite being among sick people. I always thought the fish would get enough without me, but the dear Lord took the wind out of my pride's soul. What was even worse is that I had to deal with rats at night. Once, three rats were mocking above my head. In my fear of death, I just sighed and said, "Oh dear God, please make it morning again because then it will be better." I didn't sleep, and I considered that one travels to China with rats.

Now I want to go back to 5 o'clock in the evening. We were busy not to miss anything, and we saw several dark-complected men, who we had seen in Vancouver. We were told they are Hindus. It's a nice day, and the waves aren't hitting our little boat like yesterday. Everything was ok. Sister Evangelista and I are on deck, having wonderful conversations. This ship is full of Chinese people. This is such a noisy area on the ship, you cannot understand your own words. Mother Wilhelma said, "Next year, you will speak just like that in Chinese." There aren't that many travelers on board, just 400. There are nine priests with us.

September 18

The sea is a little restless today, and you see lots of little birds suddenly vanishing in the water. I wonder what they are: birds or fish? Also, today it isn't that hot on deck, and you see white foam on the waves.

September 19

The waves are crashing powerfully on the sea. Early this morning, five priests were on deck to pray their breviary. We had our Holy Mass in the cabin. Some have it in the writing room downstairs. We say, "Praise the lord on the seas." The Sisters' feelings have changed, and they make themselves familiar with Madam Seasickness. Sister Octavia uses her potty. Sister Engelberta, too. Sister Evangelista and I are ok, and we eat lunch on deck and sing a cheerful song. Also, we pray together. Sister Engelberta sleeps with the nurses. Often, the Fathers are in the galley, and so she has to wait a little.

The waves are crashing high, and everywhere you see, pardon me, food for the fish. It's going on heavily, and here and there, somebody throws something overboard. Oh, and now Sister Evangelista is starting to feel sick, so now I am alone without my Sisters. But God has never left me because the Fathers and I, that was our whole table, are seated together. Mother Wilhelma and three others are bedridden, and I walk around here alone. Mother is not vomiting, just feeling so bad.

I checked on all the sick people, and allow me to say this – I experienced being vomited upon.

September 20

Today, the waves rage horribly, and the mast throws up the ship tremendously, and the sick people are getting worse. Out of nine priests, four stand their ground. Our priests aren't sick yet, but they don't feel that good. They have Holy Mass and communion. Sister Octavia received communion twice, and Sister Evangelista never did.

September 21

Worse than ever, the waves are crashing on deck, and the ship is rocking back and forth, unbearable. I wanted to go on deck and watch the raging sea. A respectful man asked, "Sister, how do you explain this?" I responded, "Isn't it nice that the ship is going up and down like this?" He laughed and said, "Sister, I believe if the ship went down, you would also talk like this." One says that we experienced a large storm.

September 22

The sea gets calmer, and the ship moves smoothly through the waves. It's the opposite of yesterday and the days before. Also, all my Sisters are better and making plans for the future – this is a big joy for me. One after another gets slowly out of bed. Three nurses went back on deck today, feeling better. It's a slower process for Sister Octavia. Still amusing, Director, do you know what she said? "If she were a fish, she would certainly stay at the bottom of the sea where the water is calm."

September 23

We are in the middle of the ocean, and the air is cold.

September 24

Today, we see the mountains of the Aleutian Islands through binoculars. Also, we see a lot of fish, big and small ones, and also white birds. Heaven and earth have the same color, except that earth is so cold.

September 25

There is heavenly peace on the ocean with the morning sunbeam on the water. The morning sun casts its broad rays across the sea. It is warm, and the Sisters are out of bed. We prayed together the Breviary, so we had a lively free time. I wanted to say, Director, you should have been a mouse. You couldn't imagine more funnier people in this world like us.

When Sister Evangelista and I asked Mother if she could buy us some red wine, we got this answer: "What are you missionaries thinking? Did you travel to China to drink red wine? I'm already going to fix you, so you'll have to do without." As long as we still have a sausage, it isn't that bad here without the red wine.

Here's a funny story, Director: when we prayed together evening prayers, a rat arrived. We immediately started searching for those darn rat holes as Sister Engelberta ran away, frightened. Tonight, we had music in Second Class, which is the third time for us; otherwise, it's always First Class. Tonight, every two minutes, the foghorn sounded.

September 26

The ocean is lovely, also quite warm, and it's raining. A poor bird is flying around the ship; it seems to be tired, and the countryside is too far off. The sea is again vast, and it's getting warmer day by day. Sister Evangelista saw a whale; it's a pity that I missed it. All Sisters are in good spirits today, and one says this night the steamship Russian Empire will pass, but instead we saw just a little boat. You must always set clocks; it's good that one doesn't need to travel on a journey like this too often, otherwise all clocks would break.

September 27

The weather is pretty, it has stopped raining, but the sea seems to get rougher and goes up and down a lot. The Sisters simply can't stand this, and one after another they disappear again. Mother Wilhelma, Sister Evangelista, and I had three Holy Masses today. One priest got quite sick and will have to stay in the hospital in Shanghai due to his condition.

On Monday morning at 11 o'clock, we will arrive in Japan and will be able to get off the ship. It will feel good to have ground under your feet. One says we won't leave this ship before Friday. Then we will be on a tiny boat again. This will be something again. I hope it won't move that awkwardly. The worst is still our luggage, it's almost half the size of a wagon. Mother Wilhelma has long been remarking how good it will feel if she can send a telegram to Springfield. The joy will be enormous on

both sides. But I have to say, you can feel that a lot has been prayed for us since we didn't have an accident, and that little rolling only lasted for a few days. It could have been worse. And yet I want to give you advice, Your Reverend: When you come to China, take an airplane because it will be faster and you'll save yourself from seasickness and rats. Both were rather unpleasant. Each day, we wonder what the Sisters are doing in Springfield.

I will be happy when we are finally at our new home in China, and I can cook soup for all the Sisters, and yet, at the same time, I fear that we might not even have a stove. But Mother Wilhelma will take care of things. I think, Director, if you come to visit us, everything will probably be all right.

Now I want to finish, and Mother shall write from China. Next Sunday, we may be in Shanghai, and then it won't be much longer to Tsinan. How happy we are going to be in our new home once we keep up the Holy Rule and pray and work together. Our dear God will watch over our little family with joy, and we will try hard to bring Him little sacrifices with lots of joy. Reverend Father Director, you may be assured that there will be a lot of prayers from faraway China for you and St. Joseph. We will rain down his grace and blessings on you. Also, we give our intention at the altar to your devout prayers. Here's another request I want to recommend to your heart: please write to us very often. When one letter is sent, start with the next one, and you may stick to it, please, because you cannot think of the joy when we get something from Springfield and now more than ever from Your Reverend. Now, once more, you might pardon my bad handwriting and mistakes because, from someone like me, you won't expect anything better.

In all love and in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
your always grateful

Sr. Euphrasine

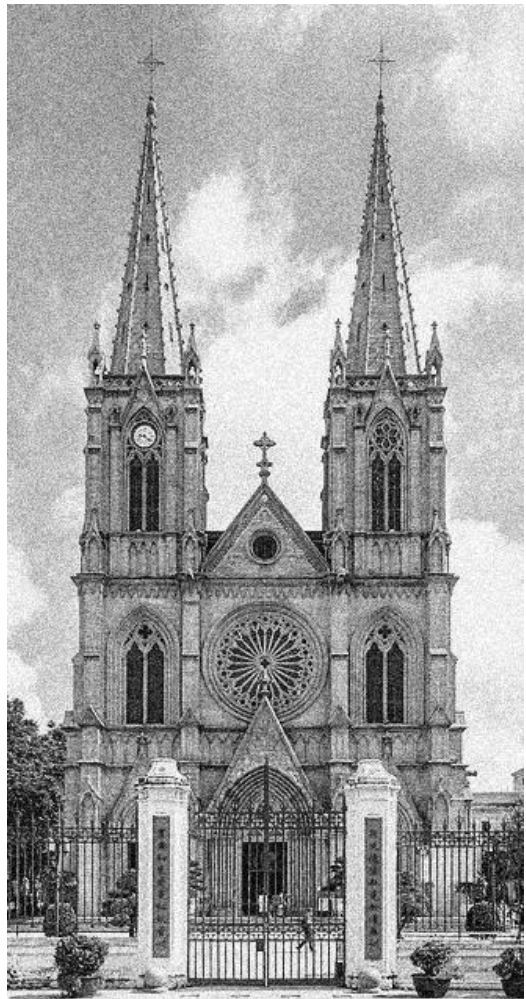
The Hospital Sisters of St. Francis in China (1925-1987)

By Sister Frances Elizabeth Schmitz, OSF

On October 4, 1925, they reached Shanghai, and on October 8, the travelers took a Japanese boat for a two-day trip to Tsingtao. Sister Evangelista wrote: *It is said that the Yellow River is the Plague of China, and it was very nearly our finish. All the Sisters were seasick, even Sister Euphrosine, who hadn't missed a meal on the ocean.*

In Tsingtao, they were guests of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, in whose Adoration Chapel they enjoyed a long visit with their Leader, telling Him of their many hopes for the mission they expected to reach on the morrow. On October 11 at seven in the morning, they began the last portion of their journey. Anxiously, they awaited news that the train had reached Tsinan. At two stations from that city, a priest met them. Several more priests were waiting at the Tsinan station when they arrived at 7 p.m.

His Excellency, Bishop Schmuecker, met the group in the yard of his residence at the cathedral and took them to the monastery chapel, where he gave an address of welcome and encouragement. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and the Te Deum intoned. With heartfelt gratitude, the Sisters received the Benediction of the Lord and joined in the closing hymn Grosser Gott. Chinese servants then served a meal. After that, the travelers were shown to their quarters for the night.



(Photo: Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral, Jinan, opened in 1905)

The next morning found the Sisters curious about the new hospital. Already, they knew that it was not nearly finished and that they would use a part of the monastery for living quarters, and the monastery chapel as their own. They were happy to return to carrying out their daily exercises according to the Rule and Constitutions, and it seemed so good to say the community prayers together before the Blessed Sacrament once again. Mid-morning, they met Mary Agnes Schong, their Chinese teacher, who assured them that all would go well in China if they would only have patience.



First photos in China 1925-26



Above (left to right): Sisters Evangelista, Euphrosine, Engleberta, Wilhelma, and Octavia

**Below: (seated) Sisters Octavia, Wilhelma and Evangelista
(standing) Sisters Engelberta and Euphrosine**





Sisters Engelberta and Euphrosine



Sisters Octavia and Engelberta

Letters from China to Monsignor Straub (1925)

Praised be Jesus Christ

Tsinan, November 10, 1925

Dear Reverend Director!

For so long, I had the good fortune to be in the dear Motherhouse and was thus relieved of the tedious task of writing. But I cannot let Christmas pass without addressing a few lines to you. How fondly I remember the lessons you imparted to us with fatherly kindness.

When we left, I felt a little heavy-hearted and didn't have much to say, but I was happy to be one of the first to make this sacrifice to China, and thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything, especially for what you have done for me in this regard. May dear God reward you a thousandfold and keep you in our midst for a long time to come. We may be far apart, but in spirit I still see you often. However, you must not think that I am homesick; on the contrary, I am happy and content. I cannot tell you much about it here because you have seen it for yourself, but I think I must tell you that I did not imagine it to be like this. The poverty and misery are great, but we are well cared for and look forward to getting started. Our hospital is still not finished because of the unrest, as it is not possible to transport the materials here. But it now seems that it will soon come to an end. We are making slow progress with the Chinese language, but we keep trying and stuttering like little children. This is met with hearty laughter, which makes it all the better. You will remember how we did it 20 years ago when you taught us English. It seems similar to me now, if not even more curious. I must also tell you that we have already taken a little trip. Once we were in the city with the Most Reverend Bishop, and another time, we went to Hungelo to see all the sights. I hope you have recovered well and that we can expect you here in 1927. Finally, I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I commend myself and the poor pagans to your pious prayers and Holy Sacrifice, and include you in my humble prayers.

I remain in the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Schwester Engelbertha

October 12, 1925

Blessed be Jesus Christ
Reverend Father Director,

Having arrived safely at our destination, I feel compelled by love and gratitude to write to you from our new sweet home. I will keep this letter brief since Sister Superior will report everything to you. We are now facing our great mission. Yesterday, I often said silently, "O dear Savior, bless our adventure." From the ship, I wrote to you, Reverend, that the Sisters were quite ill, but now everything has been happily overcome, and we thank our intercessors. May God reward everyone sometime.

On September 29, we saw on the boat where the food was cooked. I was surprised, and I thought, Oh, how easy it is to cook in a foreign country. The Sisters were afraid that I would spoil the porridge in China. We saw many beautiful things, and we played a prank on some; more about that later. In the evening, it was quite beautiful at sea, as were the lights in the mountains; one could truly contemplate God in his greatness. Finally, on October 4, we saw land again, and then we took a small boat to the beach. It was raining, and we soon didn't look like ourselves anymore. Almost everything we saw I cannot write on this paper, but one thing was the cows and warships in the harbor. We were very well taken care of, and everyone was happy to see us - strange people to them. Now we were taken to the Sisters, who welcomed us warmly, and we stayed there for four days. I thought I would learn something in a large hospital, but it turned out the other way around: the Sisters wanted to learn about American cuisine, so they asked me lots of questions, but I didn't tire of asking questions either. In Shanghai, there are more foreigners than Chinese. Everywhere they have men in the kitchen, but Sr. Superior wants nothing to do with men, so I'm keeping my business of cooking here.

Then we left Shanghai on a Japanese boat. Here, the boat also attacked the strongest fortress of rough waves. Oh, how sick I was, but Father Philip had the greatest fun with the fact that I was also among the bunch of misfortunes. We really had a good storm. But the most terrible day also has its end, and so everything will turn out well. We also went back to the same Sister in Tsintao after fasting strictly the day before, and we were looking forward to a meal again. Everywhere we went, the Most Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and it was really that we had to feel that we were God's chosen ones. Here, on October 11, I rode in a rickshaw for the first time. I will never forget how I felt here. Then, at 7

o'clock, we boarded the train, and after 12 hours, we were in the promised land of Tsinan. First, we had a solemn welcome. Then the Most Reverend Bishop gave a very moving speech. Then the Te Deum. Furthermore, we all ate supper, or rather dinner, together. At 9 o'clock we went to bed, but allow me to say, Father Director, that this evening there was no strict silence as usual, and we laughed terribly. You must forgive us, but during the night, when we woke up, we had to laugh again. Sr. Evangelista and I slept in a cell that was furnished quite monastically. I had a bed that could probably fit four people. But today we have already furnished it completely and are living according to the rules of the cloister. Strict silence is also observed again, everything according to the Holy Rule. But Reverend Father, I must tell you one thing: I had imagined it to be much worse than I found it to be. Our hospital is really beautiful, as is the kitchen. I am already looking forward to your delighting us with your distinguished visit. Oh, please come soon. Finally, we were often allowed to seek contemplation, and I asked myself, Why did you come here to become a saint, and now I hope that on the last evening of my life, I will not be disappointed, but will be able to say that it is finished. Every day, I think of this benefactor who paved the way for me.

May the dear Lord reward you richly, Your Excellency, for making it so easy for me. One is happiest when one can make many sacrifices for the glory of God. And I promise you, Your Excellency, to show myself and us in this glory. I am happy to make all sacrifices and to bring joy to the dear God and also to my superiors. With holy zeal, let us now lay the foundation stone of this mission. Every day, I will renew this resolution. Why am I here now? And I will always remain a grateful child to you, Reverend, not in words but in deeds, and I will pray for you a lot, and God will one day richly reward you for the great good you have done for me; it will not go unrewarded, you can be sure of that.

Now, forgive me for not observing propriety, but for writing on both sides and using such poor paper, but poverty will also bring you joy. Now I will close; the others will write more.

In the most Holy Heart of Jesus and Mary,
Your ever grateful and obedient,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sr. Euphrasine". The signature is written in dark ink and has a long, flowing tail that extends to the right.

Blessed be Jesus Christ
Tsinan, China
November 11, 1925

Dear Reverend Father Director!

Well, one shouldn't write too many letters, but no one can refuse a little Christmas letter. As they say, the letters will be opened, whether it's true or not. More later. Yesterday, the last two boxes arrived safely, so it seems that the way for mailings open again. There are also about 25 boxes from the Techny Fathers lying here, and we have to wait for better times, as transport is very difficult. Reverend Father Director, did you receive my last letter? Regarding the operating table solution irrigator? There is a Beckmans sterilizer or something similar that could be used on a kitchen stove, the two water boilers with cranes that nobody wants. If these were well packaged, they would arrive here in good condition; you can't buy anything like this here. In Shanghai, you could get it, but in every single case, it is imported from England, Germany, or America. They charge double the price and then some. What do you think if we made the other things out of wood? The house is not finished yet, and now with the unrest, everything is at a standstill. We received a letter dated September 20 written by Sister Magdalene. The postal service does not seem to be very good. On the other hand, the flight service is good. The items are a little shaken up, but everything is fine and can be put in order with little effort. The German gentleman who had taken on the installation of water and electricity is very ill with typhoid. Another gentleman from Tsingtau wanted to come last week and take over the work, but it was impossible to get in. This will delay the move-in date again a little longer. But in China, the general saying is "Ma manda" – just take it slowly, there's still plenty of time for everything. Well, there is one good thing about it: now we can take all the time we need to learn Chinese, because when the house is finished, all has to be cleaned properly. By the time you receive this letter, hopefully, everything will be back to normal and peaceful here. The Fathers from the mission here have a small, poor pharmacy in the other station, about 20 minutes away by rickshaw. They will have to close it when the hospital opens. For several years, it was run by an old man who dressed the patients' wounds and gave them medicine or whatever else was necessary in the

mornings, and in the afternoons, he visited the sick and baptized children. The people who come to the poor pharmacy have to pay a few copper coins, about 5 cents, for each visit. The Father said that what the Chinese get for free is not worth much to him, and more often he throws away medicine and other things, just because he thinks it is of no value, it has cost nothing. In Shanghai, everything was free. The nurse said she used \$200 worth of medicine in a month. The old man here can cover the cost of the medicine (it's 25 coppers to a cent) with the coppers he gets for his work. The question is whether we should ask for a very small payment right from the start or only do so on the first visit. My opinion is to ask for a few cents on each visit and let the poor who have nothing get it for free. I believe that in the end it would improve the situation, because the Chinese people are easily credulous and believe whatever they hear. Many are already coming; one has this, another has that, so we will probably not be short of work later.

Now, dear Reverend Father Director, how are you, are you feeling better? Will you soon be finished with the construction at the TB San so that you can treat yourself to a little rest? I am already looking forward to 1927, when you will be able to get away from there for a few months. Now I just have to tell you how things are going in our little family. Sister Wilhelma is doing well, and it's amazing how well she endures all the hardships. You should see her in Chinese class, we have to write 12 questions and answers every Sunday, and just imagine, she gets 100% every time. Sister Engelberta and Sister Euphrosine are doing well. Sister Evangelista sometimes has an ulcer on her knee; at the moment, she has one on her nose. She looks as if she has been drinking too much, but hopefully she will soon be better. As for me, I am well. The last two weeks in Springfield, I felt so bad, and then the first few days of the trip were very difficult, but now I feel better than I have in years. The saying goes that those who are sick on the water will be the best on solid ground. Whether that's true or not. It's already quite cool here, not that it's bad, but my nose needs a little more attention. No fires are lit here until after Christmas, so I wish you could see us looking like little round barrels. We often have a good laugh about how we look, but it's not so bad because no one sees us, and so we can easily live in comfort. I can tell you one thing, that I am quite happy and thank the

dear Lord and you, Reverend Father, that I am here. Sometimes I wish the hospital would be finished, but all good things take time.

In the morning at 5:15, we get up, 5:30 morning prayer, 5:45 meditation, 6:30 Holy Mass, then thanksgiving, after Holy Mass, Little Hours, then there is breakfast. Then we make our beds and study until school starts at 9 a.m. There is no lack of effort and hard work, so the dear God will surely not withhold His help from above, but please pray a little, dear Reverend Father, so that we may learn the language well. Without understanding the Chinese language, one cannot do much good. Now, God be with you until next time. I wish you, Reverend Father, a very merry Christmas. May the dear Child Jesus shower you with all His graces and blessings. As a small Christmas gift, I would like to offer up the week from December 25 to January 1 for your intentions. Please remember me during the Holy Eucharist. With warmest regards and with the shout a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I remain in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your grateful,

Schw. Octavia



Hospital Sisters of St. Francis