



Hospital Sisters of St. Francis

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From: Brian C. Blasco

Director of Communications and Archivist - Assistant Coordinator of Community Life

Date: April 10, 2025

RE: Sister Cyrilla Witte, OSF

Birth	February 5, 1832, in Cappeln, Germany, and named Anna
Parents	Bernard and Bernardina (Mumke) Witte
Entered HSOSF	January 11, 1856
Profession of First Vows	January 23, 1858
Missionary to the USA	October 1875 at age 43

Assignments

Springfield, IL	St. John's Hospital	November 11, 1875
Effingham, IL	St. Anthony's Hospital	1876 Superior/Administrator
Belleville, IL	St. Elizabeth's Hospital	1880
Springfield, IL	St. John's Hospital	1881
Effingham, IL	St. Anthony's Hospital	1882
Springfield, IL	St. John's Hospital	1892
Green Bay, WI	St. Vincent Hospital	1894
Sheboygan, WI	St. Nicholas Hospital	1897
Springfield, IL	St. John's Hospital	1904

Entered Eternal Life

May 9, 1911, and burial in Calvary Cemetery (Springfield, IL)

P.B.J.Chr.

Dearest Reverend Mother!

You surely are thinking often how the Sisters in America are faring. Thank God quite well.

We are still with the good Sisters, and are quite well and content. We hope to soon move to our House. Dear Reverend Mother, I often think, if I had not crossed the big ocean I could not believe to be in America. I imagined it quite different and I believe the dear Lord wants us to be here. When we only can speak and have sick people, then nothing is left outstanding and I hope the dear Lord will not deny us this plea. He is omniscient also that I always loved the sick and I am totally convinced, that we soon will be busy. We are so happy, we are working for our new House. We hope we move into the apartment soon.

Already I told the Sisters it is here almost as in Silesia, even the hymns in the church. If the big ocean would not exist, it would not be so bad, but that big water.

I have been so sick and three weeks endured a lot. I was convinced that I would find my final resting place in the ocean. I also was so weak. I could not breathe for weakness. I prayed to the dear Lord I truly wanted to die, but the dear Lord did not want this. I will very much want to work to the glory of God.

When we traveled from Alton to Springfield the Most Reverend Bishop met us. We were with the Ursulines. He talked a long time with us and gave us the house for 2000 \$ which the blessed Bishop had built as the Episcopal See. He said right away it should become the Motherhouse, and he gave us Father Sauer as our Director and now Sister Angelica is our Reverend Mother.

Oh, dear Reverend Mother, what I experienced at the beginning I cannot describe, only I know what I felt. The other Sisters are all so young and most likely had not the same emotions.

Springfield, November 29, 1875

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We practice diligently English, English is mostly spoken. Here are about thirty churches, one German church. Our Director takes alone care of the congregation. Sundays two Hl. Masses and Homily. In the afternoon Prayers, and all Confessions. The Priests are very busy here. The people are all surprised that the Most Reverend Bishop is so good to us.

He is so fond of us. We are his darlings. Right away in his first Homily he told us that we should not regret to have left our country. We should find here a second home, and he would do everything to help us.

Dear Reverend Mother, we cannot get here any dark bread. Usually we eat meat three times a day. We eat in the Refectory with the Sisters. Meat is here the main course. They have here such thick potatoes, they taste quite sweet. Horses and cows are outside all winter. The people have no stables for them and often they freeze to death.

Dear Reverend Mother, there is no more space. I wish you with all my filial heart a very merry Christmas and a very blessed New Year. The dear Lord make you strong. Many greetings to the remaining Sisters.

If Bismarck would know how they joke about him here he would be quite mad.

I only ask for your devout prayers.

I remain always
your loving daughter

Cyrilla

Wm. Lloyd Garrison

Q. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

King of the World's Dominion

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

SR. CYRILLA

Angel of the Battlefield

*"Who does God's work will get God's pay,
"However long may seem the day
"However weary be the way."*

Desirous of following in the Master's footsteps, Sister Cyrilla, (Anna Witte, a native of Cappel born February 5, 1832) determined at the age of twenty, to forsake the world and live henceforth the life of a poor Franciscan Sister, ministering to the sick and dying in hospitals and private homes when she presented herself as probationer to the Mother Superior at Mauritz. She was gladly accepted, inducted into the Novitiate January 17, 1857, promised loyalty to her heavenly spouse January 23, 1858, and renewed this promise twice afterward, Sept. 1, 1860, and Sept. 30, 1862. When in 1875 the call for volunteers to sail for America was made, Sr. Cyrilla was among the first to petition the mother to be sent thither. Her petition was favorably acted upon and she constituted one of the valiant twenty who were to transplant a branch of the old trunk on American soil. How she and her companions fared during the voyage and on her arrival in the new world, has been noted elsewhere. Sr. Cyrilla was sent as Superioress to Belleville and Effingham and served as nursing sister at Green Bay and Sheboygan. Notwithstanding her advanced age, she was always gay and happy in company especially when surrounded by Sisters of a younger generation. On January 23, 1883 our faithful nun celebrated her Silver Jubilee. The Silver wreath which then crowned her brow was even to ripen into a golden one, which occasion was observed with great festivity and rejoicing in 1908. Good old Sister Cyrilla went to her eternal reward to receive God's pay May 11, 1911.

Worthy of note is the fact that our good Sister served on the battlefields of three sanguinary wars, viz. the Austrian, Danish and Franco-Prussian, where her heroism and devotedness to the wounded and dying soldiers received official recognition. Who can gauge the amount of good she performed by her kind, gentle sympathetic ministrations to the wounded soldiers who often confided to her their last message to a gray haired old mother who daily waited in vain at the garden gate for the return of her soldier boy or when she knelt by the side of the dying in field and hospital, helping and comforting the struggling souls by her prayers in their last supreme moment of dissolution. At one time she became a captive in the hands of the French, was conveyed to nearest divisional headquarters and subjected to a most rigorous examination. When satisfied that she really was what she seemed to be, a Sister of Mercy and not a spy masquerading under a guise of one, she was promptly dismissed. "But that wild ride before our party was overtaken," she said, "I'll never forget". The Prussian victors of Sedan, a few short years afterward, turned her out of her native land to find a more congenial home across the ocean. God has spoken during the World War. May she rest in Peace.

