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## The Deaconesses in Strasbourg et at Hohrodberg

### CONSECRATED LIFE: A GIFT

Consecrating one's life to God is a gift, a gift that God gives to a person, like music or painting. God places in our hearts a call to receive this gift and he leaves us free to give him our yes. Jesus calls us to give him our life entirely, without limits and without fear: He loves us and does not leave us alone! We are happy to have given our lives to follow Christ.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the founder of our community, François Haerter, proclaimed the Gospel and touched many hearts. Young women felt that they were called. They began to serve the poor: "they were called servants of the poor." Each had her own apartment. With the help of the pastor, they founded a community and began to live in the same house.

The community of the "Deaconesses of Strasbourg" was founded on October 31, 1842.

The sisters made commitments: to remain celibate in order to be very available for service; to live in simplicity, sharing their property, money and strength; to live in obedience to a rule of community life and to the Gospel.

### CONSECRATED LIFE: A MISSION

In the nineteenth century, the essential need was social: care for the sick, the elderly, educating poor children. The sisters devoted themselves to this work, with all their heart, with all their energy. For love of Jesus they were ready for anything. The life of personal prayer, the reading of the Word, the common liturgy and the Lord's Supper was their basis and their strength. And God richly blessed and made all this work grow, and it continues today.

In the twentieth century, Brother Roger, Sister Antoinette Butte (Pomeyrol) and other brothers and sisters heard God's call to open places of community life, prayer and renewal.

### CONSECRATED LIFE: OBEDIENCE

They obeyed God's call. The communities of Taizé Pomeyrol, Grandchamp, were born of this obedience. Brother Roger was also deeply concerned that the communities know and

work in unity and in love. We, deaconess-sisters of Strasbourg, we consider that we are heirs of this same call and obedience.

In 1979, at the request of the leaders of our Protestant Church of Alsace, our Community heard a new call of God; thus with the help of the Community of Pomeyrol, our sisters opened a house of community life, of prayer and of spiritual retreats in the Vosges. The sisters have their rhythm of prayer and guests come for prayer and meals with the sisters.

For the community of deaconesses, this new call corresponds to a community renewal. The liturgy and the rule of the fraternity comes from Pomeyrol and Taizé. The "little rule" is recited every morning at breakfast. We still use *Praise in All Our Days*. The writings of Brother Roger are part of the novitiate library, at our fingertips! A visit to Taizé is required during the time of novitiate.

Some sisters said yes, the work could be done; people have rediscovered the joy of living, a meaningful life.

This vocation is still for today. God seeks and calls young women, young men to his service, who are not afraid to give everything to follow him.

God still calls people today.