

Mother Scholastica's Essays

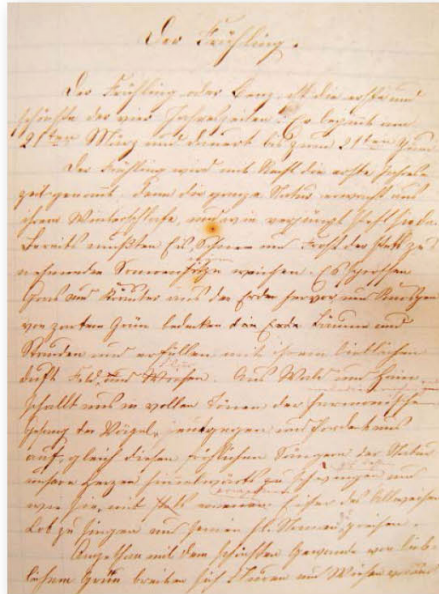
Among the unidentified items in our monastery archives was a small book of essays, written in an older German dialect by Mother Scholastica Kerst before she became our Community's founder and first Prioress. Last winter we photographed the journal and sent it for translation by Matthew Heintzelman of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library at St. John's University. The essays read a little like school assignments, possibly for high school or college. The books from which she quotes – poetry, mostly, though not all – were published in the mid-19th century. Here is the translation of the first three pages, an ode to spring.

Spring* is the first and most beautiful of the four seasons. It begins on March 21 and lasts until June 21.

Spring is rightly called the first season, for all of nature awakes from its winter slumber and appears rejuvenated. Ice, snow and frost have to retreat before the steadily increasing warmth of the sun. Grass and weeds sprout from the earth, and buds of tender green cover trees and bushes and fill the field and farmland with their sweet scent. From forest and grove the harmonious [melodious ...] song of birds resounds toward us and prompts us—just like these cheerful songsters of nature—to turn our hearts heavenwards and sing enthusiastically the praise of the Omniscient One and to worship His holy name.

Dressed in the most beautiful cloak of sweet green, the farmland and meadows spread out before us, adorned with flowers of every kind, like costly jewels that captivate our senses with their sweet aroma and magnificent ornament of colors, and invite us to thank warmly the Creator of such beauty.

* Lenz = "Lent" – this is a second, poetic word in German for Spring.



Fields for crops – the farmer's hope – lie before us, spread out widely, and the sumptuously emerging fruit offers a magnificent sight. From the cloudless sky the sun shines so peacefully on us and fills the plants and animals with new energy for life.

In the spring, more than any other time, the entire region stands ready to evoke joy in us. All sad thoughts must disappear when we wander out into nature on a charming spring morning, and a joyful feeling embraces us.

Spring offers us a beautiful image for youth. Just as the sky is cloudless in spring and all of nature provides an agreeable sight, so also is the time of youth a time of pure, untroubled joy and a time in which sin and vice are unknown. Just as one sows [seeds] in the spring and makes every effort to encourage their growth, hoping to reap a generous harvest, so too must youth be a time to fight evil inclinations, plant virtues and sow good seed, if one wants to enjoy peace in old age and one day achieve happiness.

