

# Fr. Karl HOFFMANN SDS

**IX Superior General  
of the Society of the Divine Saviour**

**\* 2 February 1940  
+ 15 December 2020**



Karl Hoffmann was born on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, 2 February 1940, in Berlin-Dahlem and a few days later, on 11 February 1940, the Feast of our Lady of Lourdes, he was baptized. In 1944, at the end of the Second World War, his family was evacuated and came from Berlin to Haren an der Ems, north of Meppen. Back in Berlin he attended school from 1946-1958, including the high school of commercials. He received his First Communion on 16 April 1950 in the Salvator Church, Berlin-Schmargendorf. He got the sacrament of Confirmation on 13 October 1952. In 1958 he began a three-year training course as a bank clerk at Deutsche Bank in Berlin, which he successfully completed in 1961.

Being active in the youth work of the Salvator parish, he was encouraged to become a Salvatorian by those confreres, who were responsible for pastoral care there. But he was particularly impressed by the 78th Catholic Congress, which took place in Berlin from 13 to 17 August 1958 and in which Karl could take part as a youthleader and acolyte. The motto of this event "***Our concern is human being - our Salvation is the Lord***" had an effect on him and became his personal motto.

The experiences of community life, youth work and the Catholic Congress moved him to join the Society of the Divine Saviour on 1 April 1961. First, he attended their late vocational school in Kaltenborn-Jammelshofen (Eifel) and started on the Feast of Mater Salvatoris, 11 October 1963 the novitiate in Passau. Exactly one year later, on 11 October 1964 he became a member of the Society, professing his first vows. After that he started his studies of philosophy and theology at the Catholic University College of Passau, that were interrupted by the semester 1966-67, which he completed at the English Heythrop College of the Jesuits near Oxford. With the perpetual profession on 11 October 1969 and the ordination of the diaconate on 1 November 1969 by Bishop Anton Hofmann in Passau Cathedral, the period of academic formation period ended.

Karl Hoffmann spent the pastoral year in Hildesheim. As a deacon, he lived and worked in the community of the Salvatorians who looked after the Liebfrauen parish in Hildesheim. He was ordained a priest there on 6 January 1971 by Bishop Heinrich Maria Jansen. Father Karl celebrated his first Mass on 10 January 1971 in the Salvator Church, Berlin-Schmargendorf, and was then appointed chaplain of the St. Gottfried parish in Münster from 1 March 1971. Here he obtained a special training for marriage, family and life counseling and took care of youth work in the parish.

After his release on 31 July 1977, he took over responsibility for the parish of St. Pius in Neuss on 1 October 1977 as pastor and was also the superior of the Salvatorian community. On 17 January 1981 he was introduced to his office as superior and treasurer of the Salvatorian community at Steinfeld (Eifel).

The 17th chapter of the North German Province met from 26 - 30 December 1985 in Horrem and elected Father Karl Hoffmann as the new Provincial; the term of office began on 1 March 1986. Initially, he was also the superior of the community in Cologne from March 1991 - with the relocation of the official seat to Münster - at the same time the superior of the community there.

The XV General Chapter of the Salvatorians, which met in Cracow (PL) from July 7th to August 6th, 1993, elected Fr. Karl Hoffmann as the 9th Superior General of the international religious society, who took up his service on 1 November 1993 in Rome . During his term of office as Superior General, Pope John Paul II visited the Motherhouse on 19 March 1999, which brought forward the beatification process of our Founder, Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan. Even as a Superior General, Fr. Karl was always a pastor. Many confreres report that they were impressed that Fr. Karl during the canonical visitations always took the first initiative to visit individual confreres rather than waiting for them to come to see him. His human kindness and nearness made the confreres feel that Fr. Karl was first their confrere and only then their superior. In the same sense, it was very important to him to always address the confreres on the very first page of "*Informationes SDS*" in order to share his thoughts with them.

In 1999 he handed over the leadership responsibility to his previous vicar, Fr. Andreas Urbanski (+2019), and begin a 'sabbatical period' in Switzerland, which included a four-month Bible study in Israel. He returned to his home province and even to his hometown at the beginning of 2001 and was again in charge of the Berlin community of Salvatorians.

Archbishop Georg Cardinal Sterzinski appointed him as "Spiritual Advisor to Pastoral and Community Assistants" on 1 January 2002 and as Spiritual of the Archbishop's Seminary on 1 September 2009. He was also a permanent confessor at the Hedwig Cathedral in Berlin. For many years, Father Karl was a member of the Presbyteral Council of the Archbishop of Berlin. Father Karl had the outstanding gift of winning people over to Christ and, as a fatherly friend, allowing them to experience the love and goodness that appeared in Christ. His fine, correct, human, amiable and also reserved manner enabled him to create an atmosphere for people in which they could flourish. He has held innumerable retreats in all the years of his service and thus brought people into contact with God.

In 2018 he was diagnosed with dementia, as a result of which he asked to be released from his official duties in the Archdiocese of Berlin. Even if the dementia increased more and more, Father Karl always kept his kindness. More and more he was dependent on the support and accompaniment of his confreres and friends, whom he always rewarded with a smile and a "Thank you". In the last few weeks of his earthly pilgrimage, his physical strength decreased significantly. During a hospital stay he was infected with the Covid-19 virus, where on 15 December 2020 the Saviour accepted his faithful servant and our dear confrere Fr. Karl.

The Resurrection Office will take place on Tuesday, December 29, 2020 in the Steinfeld Basilica followed by the burial on the cemetery of the monastery.

May he rest in the Peace of our Divine Saviour.

The Salvatorians