Theresia
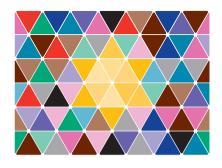## KARAS

Theresia Karas

Theresia Karas was born on 13th May 1928 in Salzburg, Austria. She was the fourth child of a railway official, Josef, and Maria Karas, a housewife. When she was just two years old, Theresia caught polio, a highly infectious disease, which crippled one of her hands. She also suffered from epilepsy.

In 1933, Theresia spent a lot of time in different hospitals. She was given treatment for her hand, and then spent six months in hospital after surgery on her brain. From 1934 to 1937, Theresia was well enough to go to primary school at Salzburg-Gnigl where she was supported by her siblings. However, by the time she was nine Theresia's epilepsy had become worse and she had to spend the next two years at home.

On 21st September 1939, Theresia was admitted for therapy at the Diakoniewerk Gallneukirchen – a home for the disabled run by the Church. For the next two years she corresponded regularly with her family and even made handicrafts. On 13th January 1941, twelve year-old Theresia was one of 59 people transported to Hartheim Castle where she was murdered. Five days later, the family were informed that Theresia had been transferred to the psychiatric hospital Sonnenstein in Germany. The family were suspicious, and frantically tried to contact Theresia by visiting her and by writing a letter. Finally on 28th January Theresia's parents were told that she had died two days earlier of a blood infection. A few weeks later they received an urn, apparently with Theresia's supposed ashes in it, but none of her personal belongings.

Theresia's family were still suspicious, and turned to Anna Perner, one of the nuns of the Diakoniewerk Gallneukirchen. In time she sent them a padded envelope with a note hidden in it, telling them that Theresia had been murdered.