

When Germany had begun to overcome the after-effects of the war lost in 1945, a remarkably rapid period of recovery, the so-called *Wirtschaftswunder*, occurred. It was greatly aided by American Marshall Aid in 1948. The currency was stabilised and the influx of millions of US dollars led to industrial and social changes. Konrad Adenauer as the Chancellor of West Germany had as one of his political aims an extensive building program, with preference for the middle classes, which had suffered so extensively through the nation-wide destruction of houses and homes.

It was a Protestant Clergyman, Georg Rückert, who realised that novel ways of Christian Care had to be explored during this period of great sociological changes in Germany in the 1950s. One of these, common to the whole Western world, was the inability, or even the unwillingness, of the younger generations to look after their aging parents, as large family homes, suitable for two, three or even more generations, had become financially impossible in European and American cities. This age-old tradition of generational co-habitation has, however, survived in the East and in a few rich Western families.

Rückert was inspired in his work by Aurelius Augustinus (354-430 AD) the great early philosopher of Christianity who for a time was the Bishop of Hippo Regius, the modern Annaba on the Algerian coast, then the Roman Province of Numidia. Many of his writings have survived and were translated, and he is generally considered as one of the Fathers of the Christian Church. The basic principle of his entire theology has been described as the 'outgoing energy of creative love' [*Encyclopaedia Britannica 15th Ed. Vol 14*].

Beginning in 1954, at the 1600 Anniversary of the birth of Augustinus, with a Protestant Students Home in Munich, the concept of a 'Collegium Augustinum' was expanded by Rückert to include an 'Old-age Residence Foundation', a *Wohnstift*, and by January 1962, the first resident moved into his apartment at the first Wohnstift, built at Neufriedenheim in Munich.

The novel idea of the Wohnstift, providing Freedom and Independence, yet Security in old age, while living in a Community provided with rich cultural events, proved so successful that these Institutions multiplied rapidly in Germany (one in Austria) during the last decades of the 20th century. By the year 2000 there were more than 22 of these multi-unit apartment buildings from Hamburg in the North, Bonn in the West, to Berlin in the East and Vienna in the South. The almost luxurious comfort, providing for the upper middle class the highly desirable alternative to generational co-habitation, has made the Collegium Augustinum a sociologically successful innovation.