

Sister Johanna v.d. Heijden (Maria Aloysia)

**Deceased on 27th July 2022 in Boxtel, The Netherlands
at the age of 88**

Born on 28th August 1934 in Beek en Donk, The Netherlands

**First Profession on 15th August 1958 in Esch, The
Netherlands**

Johanna was born in Beek en Donk into a family with two sons and four daughters and she was the eldest. Her father was a farmer. Her mother was sickly and died early.

At the age of 18, after two years of agricultural domestic science school, Johanna was responsible for the entire family and the farm. As a result, it was not possible for her to continue studying, even though she was intelligent.

However, she had one great desire: to become a missionary. This was partly encouraged by her parents. The simplicity of the White Sisters and the focus on Africa appealed to her. She wanted to share the richness of the Faith and show her love and involvement.

With confidence, and a deep love for the mission, she entered on the 2nd July 1956, the White Sisters in Maarn at the age of 22. After her first profession in 1958 and the international year in Algiers, she returned to Boxtel for further education and in August 1961 she went to Liverpool to learn English.

In 1962 she was appointed to Malawi, where she taught her first Bantu language, *Chigumbura*. Here she became the Head of the Domestic Science school and Superior of two successive communities, first in Nkamenya and later in Likuni.

In Likuni, she became responsible for the accounts of the girls' secondary school and the mission hospital. She also learned *Chichewa*, her second native language. She had a hard time when her father died and she not could be present.

On behalf of the Provincial superior of Malawi and Zambia, Johanna also took part in the General Renewal Chapter.

Unfortunately, she had to return to the Netherlands in 1969 for serious back surgery. After a lengthy rehabilitation in Sterksel and Mook, she became Superior in the Community of Esch and a member of the Dutch Provincial Council.

After further training in accounting and administration she happily returned to Malawi in '73 as a Provincial Bursar. As she herself said: “I have had my best and most unforgettable years here, I really loved the people.”

Apparently her managerial and administrative qualities were noticed and three years later, in February 1977, she was appointed to the Mother House in Frascati as General Economist for the entire congregation worldwide. This new appointment and her departure from Africa, were by no means easy for Johanna and she shed many tears over this. But eventually she found her way in Rome and during 20 years, she made many international contacts and implemented several important reforms, especially on the pensionfund.

Besides English and French, she also learned Italian and she made many business visits in different countries, to inform the sisters about her plans.

At the end of this important period in her life, she took a sabbatical in Esch to recover. However, in 1997 she was asked to become Superior and Director of the sister's retirement home Verrieres le Buisson in France and then hand it over to a lay director.

After this job was done, she was asked to become Provincial Bursar of Canada, America and Mexico. She did this for five years with her complete satisfaction. In 2006 she returned to Boxtel and became Regional Bursar and Superior of the community in Molenwiek. The mother house Sancta Monica in Esch had meanwhile been sold.

Here she once again fulfilled her task with devotion and a great sense of responsibility, together with external advisers and accountant Nanny Geers. In 2015 she handed over this work entirely to Nanny, who was appointed Lay Accountant, and finally she could retire at 82.

In 2018 she moved to the Wereldhuis, together with the Sisters still in Molenwiek, and the community was closed.

It was not always easy for Johanna physically; her condition often caused her to be in pain. She bravely fought through this and continued

to follow closely everything from the Congregation. She expressed her opinion in a well-considered way.

In the course of this last year, she had more and more problems with her legs and needed a lot of care, especially at the end.

Looking back on her life, Johanna writes: “All in all, my life started 'small' in Beek en Donk, but it became 'larger' through all the international contacts within and outside the Congregation”. And that “after my retirement, I continued my life journey with confidence in the future, in surrender and with joy, until I would be taken into FULL LIFE for good”.

Her life's journey has now come to an end. After a short illness, she passed away peacefully Wednesday evening 27th August in the presence of a fellow Sister.

Dear Johanna, thank you so much for everything you have done for the Congregation.

May you rest in the Eternal Love and Peace of the Lord.