

Sister Agnes Maijer (Hermina Marie)

Deceased on the 20th May 2022 in Boxtel, The Netherlands

At the age of 91

Born on 8th October 1930 in Krommenie, The Netherlands

First Profession on 26th October 1952 in Esch, The Netherlands

Sister Agnes was born as the last child into a religious, hard-working, working-class family with eighteen children, (where four of them died shortly after birth) of five brothers and eight sisters.

Her father was a cabinetmaker and grew vegetables for his family and the entire neighbourhood. He was also often away in the evenings for board meetings of all kinds of Roman Catholic associations. Mother was always caring for the family and was very much liked in the neighbourhood, as she helped many other people.

After Agnes had finished the primary school and a year at the domestic science School. At the age of 14 she already had to take care of the family and housekeeping, because her mother died in 1945 at the age of 59, just before the end of the II World-War, Agnes was very sorry to have to drop out of school and would have liked to continue learning.

Agnes wanted to 'help people' just like her mother. She felt called to serve those who had nothing and who were barely able to feel free. She didn't know yet "where the Lord wanted her to go." However, she found comforting words in the Gospel and in her faith in difficult moments. She felt called to be a missionary, but had no idea what she was getting into.

Before entering the Congregation, Agnes had a conversation with her father. "Child", he said, "it's not a mere trifle that you are starting, but if you're going, do it right."

At the age of 20, at 12th September 1950, she entered the postulate of the White Sisters' Congregation, in Maarn. Two years later, Agnes did her first profession in the Chapel of Sancta Monica in Esch. Despite a strict novitiate period, she persevered and she felt that her calling was strong.

After the international training year in the Motherhouse in Algiers, she was named for the Belgian Congo, that was still a colony. At the end of 1953 and after a short stay in Boxtel, she left by boat from Antwerp to the Congo, and was named for Bunia at the novitiate of the African Sisters. For 9 years she taught them sewing and cooking. She also loved cooking for large groups and trying everything herself, such as cheese making, slaughtering, sausage making, bread baking, etc.

With all her heart and soul, she committed herself to sharing her life with the people of Africa, on their way to a better future. Agnes' life has become a message of 'care for each other', especially the care for the underprivileged.

In november 1962, Agnes was appointed for Albertville (later Kalemie), but there were serious disturbances. Rebels were active and many people, including religious, were killed or fled. It was too dangerous there and at the end of 1964 she was obliged to return to Brussels and the Netherlands, passing by Frascati. This was a restless and traumatic period for her, which she still suffered from later on. During her stay she went to Bodeghem for her Third Year and helped out in the community of Esch.

In 1969 she returned to her beloved Kalemie and became a 'maitresse de la maison' (housekeeper) and to work with sororities. She was very inventive and knew how to deal with

all kinds of local products and ingredients in a creative way. She also loved the children around. After four years she returned to the Netherlands for a holiday and study and returned again from Brussels to Kalemie.

After three years, Agnes was sent to a missionary school in Kinama, just across the border in Burundi where many Congolese refugees lived, not an easy job because of the corruption. Again, three years later, in 1981, she moved back to the Congo, to Moba. Here Agnes did a lot of social work with the women, putting her practical talents to good use such as gardening, cooking, sewing, childcare and odd jobs. In the Netherlands she had already completed a number of additional courses for this.

In 1987, after a holiday in Esch, Agnes left again Brussels for Kalemie, where she worked with the women and girls at school and taught sewing. Few years later she contracted severe typhus and cerebral malaria, she had to give up a lot physically and had to return to the Netherlands for good in 1990.

It was not always easy for Agnes to live in a community with other sisters. She often felt wronged and found it difficult to meet them. On the other hand, there were fortunately others she could vent her heart to and she had a good relationship with her family ('auntie-sayers') and some friends. When she also talked about her extended family, all the cousins, it was sometimes hard to get in the way....

After wandering around the communities on Antoon der Kinderenlaan in Den Bosch, Huize Steenwijk in Vught and Sterksel, she got a job as a housekeeper at the rectory of the Witte Paters in Haelen (Limburg). She did this for seven years to her full satisfaction and finally she took a well-deserved retirement in 2001.

In 2002 she got a service flat in Driebergen. After ten years the Congregation asked her to move to Boxtel, because they wanted to bring all the sisters together. From 2012 she lived in “Molenweide” nursing home, which later became Wereldhuis. Here she spend the evening of her life with others. She loved to make cards and could be very sweet and caring at certain times.

She often went to the chapel. With her prayer she was connected to all who needed her prayer and was connected with her Creator, for whom she had worked here on earth in her own way. That gave her joy and peace.

Eventually Sister Agnes developed an aggressive form of lymphoma. She has been in a lot of pain over the past year and we thank the Lord that her suffering is over. The death of her last brother Chris left her very sad.

She had fully hoped that she could still celebrate her 70th anniversary, together with the two other jubilarians, on August 26, 2022 within the Congregation, but unfortunately this was not to be the case. Fortunately, she was able, a month ago, to celebrate this in a different way, together with her family and loved ones. We are very grateful for this.

Dear Agnes, may you now rest in the Eternal Peace of the Lord with your parents and brothers and sisters.