

In Memoriam SISTER HENDRIKA FREYSE (Philomena)
Deceased on the 27th July in Nuland, The Netherlands
At the age of 88

She was born on 20th May 1933 in Oisterwijk, The Netherlands

First Profession on 9th of February 1961 in Esch, The Netherlands

After an unfortunate fall and followed by a short illness, Sister Hendrika Freyse passed away in St. Jozefoord in Nuland on the 20th of may at the age of 88.

Sister Riek as she was called, was the second child, and the eldest girl in a family of eight children. Father worked as a tanner and later as a funeral director. Mother was a gentle loving woman and took care of the family. She was often sick and Riek was deeply impressed by this. An aunt, who was very strict, came often to help with the household, much to the chagrin of the children, because they were often punished. After having finished primary and secondary school (MULO), Riek took on several clerical jobs. Afterwards she worked as a doctor's receptionist. She also trained as a family carer. "All of this was a good preparation for her missionary life", she said.

More and more she started feeling the call to be a missionary and came in touch with the White Sisters. Her parents had difficulty with the fact that she went to a missionary congregation. Yet, On the 2nd of January 1959, they brought her to the Postulate of the White Sisters in Maarn. On the 15th of August, she started her Noviciate in Esch and on the 9th February 1961 she took her first Vows. She then left for the Motherhouse in Birmandreis in Algeria for a year of further formation. After the session she came back to the Netherlands and stayed for two years in Esch.

In April 1963 she left for Britain to learn English and to continue her further education. During her stay in Britain, her father died. She was very sorry that she was not allowed to attend the funeral. This was a big blow to her. She wanted so badly to comfort her mother. Later on, her siblings also married in her absence.

In 1965, Riek was appointed to Tanzania where she worked in various missions. First, she was in Tabora to learn Kiswahili. Then in Sumve for housekeeping and later in the hospital of Bukumbi, where she alternated between administration and pastoral care.

In 1971, she went on leave and was four years in the community van s'-Hertogenbosch for study and graduated as a domestic teacher. In September 1975 Riek went to Frascati for her Third Year and in January 1976 she left again for Tanzania. She enjoyed teaching in Kashozi and Bukoba. However, this did not last long.

The highlight for her was working from 1978-1982 in Kitwe and Isingiro, in President Nyerere's Ujamaa villages. There she worked with the girls on the land and taught nutrition in the villages. Sr. Jeanne Simons was her fellow-sister there.

Her last posts were in Kipalapala, where she was a hostess in the Language hostel, and two years as a pastoral worker in Sumbawanga.

In November 1987, Riek returned to the Netherlands for holidays and later would stay definitely. She then lived one year in Den Bosch for Mission animation and afterwards in the different communities of Esch, Vught and Sterksel.

This went with ups and downs, as she wrote herself. It was not always easy for Riek to live in a community, neither in Africa nor in the Netherlands. Especially her quick hurt and her psychological health played tricks on her, which made life with other sisters not always easy. This had not gone smoothly in Africa either, sometimes she could remain silent for days.

Since 2005, Sister Riek moved to the Care Home St.Jozefoord in Nuland, and lived there together with a number of other White Sisters, like Marianne Kemmeren, Sr Damiani, Josina van de Wiel and Johanna Senten. The last sister she lived with, is Sr. Annie de Groot, who is still alive. Here she was in a way happy to live there. Despite the recurring depressions, in this place she felt 'at home', at times walking around all day with her walker with a large Mercedes sign in front, waving to everyone. She was part of a reading group with other sisters. But even in her melancholy times, she still wanted to come, and she moved even though she didn't say anything.

When someone came from Boxtel, or her family, she was sometimes talkative and other times not. She had great confidence in the pastor of St.Jozefoord. She often came to him for help and felt understood and safe, even in her depression.

She looked back on her missionary life with gratitude, even though she had to give up a lot due to her mental problems and having to let go of things. This year 2021, she celebrated her jubilee of 60 years of profession.

Riek was not an easy person, neither for herself nor for others. However, she had great faith in God and put her trust in Him, as He comes to us in the Bible, as the Eternal.

Dear Riet, may you now rest in His Eternal Love and Peace. Amen.

ANNEX:

Part of the Speech of the Pastor Gert Groen of St. Jozefoord, Nuland at Riek's funeral on the 3rd of September 2021 in the Worldhouse in Boxtel:

We heard at the In Memoriam where and how Sister Riek has committed herself as a White Sister to others, here in the Netherlands and in Africa. And that she did so in all her vulnerability. Time and time again Riek was immersed inwardly in a dark swamp, visible to the outside world only in an inaccessible and closed silence.

We here in Nuland, were always happy and moved when she was suddenly back among the living, when life was back in her. Then she was a wonderful person, who was liked. But what if she suddenly fell back into the dust again, and there was almost no contact possible anymore. However, she had great faith in God and put her trust in that mystery as it comes to us in the Bible.

Dying again and again within, and rising again and again, returning to life. I'm sure her faith in God played a part in that. She didn't talk much about it, but in the basket of her walker you could, for example, come across texts from a retreat that had been given long ago.

May she be in the light, in the life of God, the life to which the resurrection refers.

May she rest in peace. Amen.

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