

## **Sister Attje Theresia Brattinga (Dora)**

**Deceased on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022 in Boxtel, The Netherlands  
at the age of 87**

**Born on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1934 in Westhem, The Netherlands**

**First Profession on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1956 in Esch, The  
Netherlands**

We had hoped that Theresia would a little longer stay with us, but due to her progressing illness, Theresia was forced to give up. After a few days in bed, she peacefully passed away in her room, at noon on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November, in the presence of Sister Greet de Vries and a member of our Care Team. On Monday, she had still had received the *Last Sacrament of encouragement*.

Sister Theresia, known as Attje, was very proud of her Frisian roots and that level-headedness. Born in Westhem near Blauwhuis, she kept in touch with the people throughout her missionary life. Her great trust in the Lord led her through very difficult periods of war and conflict.

Sister Theresia was born in a deeply Catholic working-class family; her father was a labourer and her mother cared for the family. She had one brother called Jack and one sister called Ietje, who joined the Congregation of the sisters of Amersfoort.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school, Attje already had the desire to become a missionary, attracted as she was by the stories of other religious, who went to the mission. After finishing Domestic School and her dressmaker diploma, she got a job in the hospital of Sneek. Here she came into contact with the blue propaganda booklets of the White Sisters.

After her parents gave permission, Theresia wanted to enter as soon as possible, but she had to wait until she was 18 years. At the end of 1953 the time had finally come and on 28<sup>th</sup> of December she entered in the Postulate in Maarn and made her First Vows in Esch on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1956. Just last year she celebrated her 65th anniversary of Profession, together with Sister Greet de Vries.

After her international year in Algiers, Saint Charles, Theresia left in 1957 for the Congo, on the shore of Tanganyika Lake. She felt chosen, finely a Missionary. She did not know that she arrived in the most turbulent country of Africa.

In Baudouin Ville was a Teacher-Training boarding school and a hospital with a leprosy camp, where she visited the sick. She started teaching cooking and sewing and became active in the youth movement.

In 1960 the Congo, became the independent Democratic Republic of Congo and this caused a lot of unrest. Missionaries were murdered and Theresia had to flee several times together with her fellow Sisters and her students. They literally escaped death.

She made her Eternal Profession in 1962, also the year in which she was cut off from all communication with the outside world. Fourteen years she enjoyed working there, despite the fear of war and rebellion. In 1968 she went for home leave and returned for another 3 years to Baudouin Ville. In 1970 all schools were nationalized and Theresia switched to pastoral work.

In 1971, she went to Frascati for her Third Year and remained in the Netherlands for study while helping out in the kitchen.

In 1973, she returned to the Democratic Republic of Congo and went to Bunia for 2 years of Study of Catechises.

She now went to Moba and Bukavu where she trained Catechists and their spouses. With a motorboat she visited the villages on Lake Tanganyika and also visited prisoners.

Meanwhile, her mother had passed away in 1980.

After a short leave in The Netherlands, she was appointed again for Bukavu, where she had previously worked. Here she started working as head of the kitchen and pastoral worker in the parish of Kadutu. A year later, the genocide in Rwanda began, leaving tens of thousands of refugees in eastern Congo. Even in the camps, the refugees were not safe from massacres, so they had to flee again. Refugees were also received in the community of Theresa, at the risk of their own lives.

After a retreat in Belgium in 1993, Sister Teresa was appointed to Mingana, a remote outpost in the jungle. Here she taught at the teacher training college and took care of the illiterate mothers and the organization of small Christian communities. She still worked in several missions till the end.

After working as a missionary for almost 50 years, Theresia returned to the Netherlands for good in 2006. She first went to live in the regional house in the Prins Bernardstreet in Boxtel. Six years later she moved to the Molenwiek, where she became superior of the community. In 2016 the Community closed and the sisters moved to the care home of Molenweide,

now called **Wereldhuis**. Here she lived happily and as a convinced missionary she continued to work for refugees and all the other people around her.

Our Attje was a dear, warm and welcoming Sister, who remained faithful to her vocation and who felt deeply inspired by the Holy Spirit and the words of Cardinal Lavignerie and Mere Marie Salome, the founders of our Congregation. She also said that *her funeral mass should be a sign of gratitude and love*, just like her life was. After a terminal illness (cancer of the intestines), which increasingly bothered her, she is now where she wanted to be. Fortunately, she was able to say goodbye to many people in person, both live and by telephone. Dear Theresia, may you live in *Eternal Joy with your Lord*.