

Sister Blien Veldman (Sibbelina)

Deceased on 24th January 2023 in Boxtel, The Netherlands

at the age of 95

She was born on 26th January 1928, Zuilen (Utrecht), The Netherlands

First Profession on 9th February 1959 in Esch, The Netherlands

After a pleasant visit to her sister Ria in Heeswijk-Dinther, Blien unfortunately had a fall. She became unwell and ended up in the hospital. She turned out to have a brain damage after which she fell into a coma. After a week at home in her room in the Wereldhuis, where her fellow sisters constantly watched, Sister Blien passed peacefully away.

Sister Blien came from a Catholic family in Zuilen in Utrecht with three brothers and four sisters. Her father Jos was vice-chairman of the Catholic Labour Movement and very active in all kinds of Catholic organizations. He was also a member of the Provincial Executive of Utrecht. He was always out, a lot of evenings away, but he knew how to give enough love attention to his children.

Her mother was a down-to-earth, strong and spirited woman who took good care of everything. Blien said there was always a happy atmosphere at their home, even though she was a quiet lonely child herself.

During the Second Worldwar, her father was taken hostage by the Germans in the Seminary of St. Michielsgestel together with all kinds of Dutch dignitaries. After a tense time, he was happily released after half a year.

Blien wanted to go into nursing and therefore she went to the evening MULO. (Secondary School). Despite the fact that she did not make it, she was still able to go to the nursing school in Zutphen. Her father had arranged it for her. After this, she and a friend went to the mission

school for lay people of the Grail Movement in Ubbergen, because she wanted to help people in Africa. Here she came into contact with the White Sisters, who taught Swahili and were apparently a source of inspiration for her, so she wanted to join them. Her father and mother were not very happy about it.

On January the 21st 1957 at the age of 29, she entered in Maarn, to begin her religious formation and after her noviciate in Esch she made her First Vows on 15th of August 1957. Right after this she left for Algeria for the year of international formation.

After additional training in England, she was appointed to the clinic in Kagondo, Tanzania in 1962, where she started working as head nurse in the women's ward. Her sister Liesbeth was now working in Uganda in another hospital. They spent a few days there together, to their mutual joy.

After 7 years, Blien returned to the Netherlands to continue her education in paediatrics. Back in Kagondo, however, she became an operating assistant, which she did not feel that this at all suited her. Fortunately, after six months she left for the children's ward at Ndala Hospital.

The next post was Mabamba, where she experienced all kinds of adventures and also met president Nyerere with his wife, both trained by the White Fathers and White Sisters. After independence in 1960, he was Tanzania's first President.

In 1975 she went to Frascati for her Third Year. Thereafter she returned to Ussongo. Intermittently serving as a substitute at other missions, Blien returned to Ndala in 1977, where she became head of the nursery: "Her best years", as she said herself.

After another new assignment in Isingiro, where she had to work the nightshifts on her own, she was completely exhausted and contracted malaria. In 1986, the post was closed and she returned to the Netherlands to rest. After three more temporary appointments in Itumba, Kipalapala and Tabora, where she no longer worked as a nurse, she returned permanently to Esch. She was very sorry to leave nursing, but she could no longer cope with all those heavy shifts.

Because she was still overworked, she spent a year in a medical centre in Voorschoten. She then lived for three years in the community of Huize Steenwijk in Vught, after which in 1995 she ended up in the community of Den Bosch (Bois le Duc) for social work. She also lived on her own for a few years in an apartment nearby.

Searching for a new interpretation of her missionary status, she went to work as a volunteer together with sisters Truike de Win and Joanna Dekkers. She started working at the Inloopschip, a shelter for the homeless. She had a great time there. Later she also started volunteering at the Journal for the homeless in Den Bosch, which homeless people sold in the streets for an extra income.

In October '98 the community in Den Bosch closed and Blien moved to the community in Klooster Terhaghe in Eindhoven, where she lived happily for 15 years together with the Sisters of Mercy of Gent. In 2020 the community closed and all the remaining White Sisters moved to the carehome Wereldhuis (Worldhouse) in Boxtel.

Lately she started to worry more and more about her health and after an unfortunate fall she fell into a coma and eventually died in the presence of her fellow sisters. Fortunately her sister Ria, together with her cousins, had met Blien just before.

Blien was a spontaneous, cheerful woman with a sometimes naughty sense of humour and a strong faith. She thought nursing was a wonderful profession and was extremely grateful that she had the opportunity to work with and for many Africans. She had a big heart especially for the children.

*Good Bye Blien, we will miss your jokes and your ideas.
May you now rest in the Eternal Peace of the Lord.*

Marina van Dalen/MSOLA-NL, febr 23

Translation: Sr Tiny Holscher