

# **Sister Annie (Johanna) van Oostrum**

**(Alphonse Rodriguez)**

**Deceased on 21th April 2023 in Boxtel, the Netherlands**

**At the age of 89**

**Born on 3rd November 1932 in Vleuten/De Meern, the Netherlands**

**First Profession on 15<sup>th</sup> Augustus 1965 in Esch, the Netherlands**

After a visit from her family, Sister Annie passed away peacefully on Friday evening in the presence of one Sister. She had been weakening for a long time, especially shortness of breath played tricks on her. After three days in bed, she had to give up.

Annie, as she was called, was born in a simple but very warm and protected Catholic family. She was the eldest of 4 brothers and 3 sisters. Her father was a labourer and her mother a housewife. They lived next door to her uncle's family, her father's twin brother. Her grandfather lived in a cottage on the other side of the river Rijn. Her father died at the age of 64, when Annie was already in Tanzania. She didn't hear it until 14 days later.

All four of Annie's Brothers emigrated to Canada, of which Joseph is the only brother left. One of Annie's sisters emigrated to Australia and the other two, Lenie and Thea, are here.

Annie went to the primary school with her niece Willie. After having completed this, Annie obtained her sewing certificate. She wanted very much to become a dressmaker, but had to help in the work at home.

She also wanted to be a missionary and, on the 4th March 1952, she entered at the age of 19, the postulate of the White Sisters in Maarn. However, after a year and a half she fell ill and had to go back home. She was still too young. After some time, she started working as a domestic help in a farmer's family in Bunnik. This happened to turn out to be the family of the three White Sisters van Bentum: Margreet, Agatha and Helena.

After that, she, at the request of the Congregation, trained as a nurse at the St. Elisabeth Hospital in Tilburg. It was a very pleasant time, Annie said, even though she didn't like dancing or parties, but she loved fashion shows!

In 1957, when she received her nursing certificate, Annie rejoined the White Sisters. This time in the Sancta Monica convent in Esch. She there made her temporary vows on 15<sup>th</sup> august 1959 and went to Algiers for the International Year of Formation, all in French. After this year she first studied English in Heston and in 1961 she was appointed to Tanzania.

She first learned Swahili in Mwanza and then went to the community in Bukumbi. Here she made her Perpetual Vows in 1965. For 5 years she supervised the sewing room, kitchen and equipment of the hospital. She then came back to the Netherlands and was asked to be a nurse for the elderly Sisters in Sterksel.

In April 1969 she went to Frascati for the Third year. She then returned to Tanzania and worked in Kasulu, but was called back for 5 years to serve in the Generalate. In 6 Juni 1975 she went to visit her relatives in Canada. She stayed in the community of Quebec for another 3 years to adapt the habits of the Canadian sisters to modern times. Both skirts and veils became shorter.

In 1979 Sr. Annie was appointed for Bukavu in Eastern Congo, where rebels were already active at that time. First, she had to learn Congolese Swahili, which was different from Tanzanian Swahili, but she quickly picked up the new language. In Katana, Kalima and Kasongo, Annie worked with local women's groups from the parishes, teaching them sewing and handicrafts. She knew her job very well and was very precise and tidy. In between she regularly went on holiday to the Netherlands or to visit family in Canada.

In 1996, when it became too dangerous in Eastern Congo, she had to leave Kasongo, but in 2000 she returned to Bukavu, but in a different place, Kadutu. Here she did pastoral work in the parish. In 2007 she worked for another two years in her beloved Kasongo, after which she had to leave for good, to the Netherlands at the end of 2009.

She found it very difficult to return and would have preferred to stay in the Congo. But after 50 years, the Congregation thought it was enough and asked her to emigrate back to Boxtel because of her age and her health. Here she went to live in the community of the Molenwiek, where Srs Theresia, Jo, Joanna, Johanna and Gerda also lived. In 2018, Annie moved to the Wereldhuis, the former Molenweide, together with the other sisters of the Molenwiek. Due to increasing somatic complaints, caused by her Parkinson's and advanced age, Sr Annie moved two years ago to the so called "Saffier" ward, where she received more care.

Recently, Annie had more and more shortness of breath and had to regularly use oxygen. She also had difficulty speaking and swallowing. Her head grew further and further down, so that she could no longer see properly. In short, she was struggling and feeling increasingly uncomfortable. The Sisters still went to her to read some French texts or let her listen to an audio book or Radio Maria, but it became increasingly difficult. Fortunately, her cousin Willie was able to visit her with the "Wish-ambulance", as was so called. She really liked that.

On Friday, April 21, her sisters Lenie and Thea and brother-in-law Gerard came to the Wereldhuis to say goodbye to Annie and fifteen minutes after they had left, Annie breathed her last. Now Annie is free from her suffering and we are grateful

that Annie has now been the end out of her misery and pain. Annie, we will continue to pray for you. ***May you rest in Eternal Peace with your Lord, to whom you have dedicated your entire life. Thank you for everything you have done for the Congregation. Amen.***