

Sister Catharina (Catrien) Boonman (Lydia Maria)

Deceased on 7th September 2023 in Boxtel, the Netherlands at the age of 93

Born on 4th March 1930 in Ovezande (Zeeland), The Netherlands

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

Lately, the energy of Sr. Catharina was already reducing, mentally and physically. She suddenly became sicker and bedridden and on the 7th of September our sister Catharina (Catrien) Boonman died peacefully in her room in the Worldhouse.

Catrien came from a large catholic family from the small village of Ovezande in Zuid-Beveland, (Zeeland.) Her father was a farmer and mother were a housewife, still wearing a real Zeeland hood with earrings. Our sisters remembered that well. Catrien also wore it herself when she was young.

She had six brothers and five sisters. After primary school she went to the two-year farmer's school, where she learned general domestic education: cooking, sewing, ironing, etc., but also the trade of a farmer, both horticulture and livestock farming. A very practical and very valuable training, especially considering her later calling as a sister in Africa. All of these skills would serve her well in the mission.

She had a great desire to become a missionary and on the 7nd January 1975 she joined the White Sisters in Maarn for the postulancy. She did her novitiate and made her 1st Profession on 2nd February 1959 at Sancta Monica in Esch and went to the international year St. Marie in Algiers. There she learned French and did an internship in Laghouat and Les Attafs in the desert.

For some years she was in the Netherlands to help out in Boxtel and in Den Bosch (Duketown) where she did missionary education. In 1965 she went to Liverpool to learn English. She finally stayed there for five years and obtained her certificates to teach Religion and Domestic Science.

After having followed in 1970 the probation in Frascati, she was finally appointed for Africa, which was what she was all about. It became Lilongwe in Malawi. First, she had to learn the Chichewa language. She started teaching home economics and Homecraft to girls' schools and women's groups. Later she focused more on social work. Intermittently, she also worked in the 1980's in the Netherlands in the communities of Sterksel and Den Bosch, where she did the kitchen and Mission Chaplaincy. Due to severe shortness of breath, she was a while in the hospital in Geldrop and received therapy for her respiratory tract.

In 1992 she was allowed to return to Africa, first to Chilinde, later back to Lilongwe. She worked here as a social worker until 1998, before finally returning to the Netherlands to enjoy her retirement.

After several years in the community in Esch, she moved in 2002 to Klooster Terhaghe in Eindhoven, where there was a large community of White Sisters who lived together with the sisters of Charity of Ghent. She really enjoyed it there.

She underwent a major back surgery and also on her Carotid Artery in 2006, but fortunately recovered well.

In 2019, Catrien came to the Wereldhuis, where she lived in the Psycho-geriatric department due to cognitive problems. Fortunately, the following year all her fellow Sisters from Eindhoven followed and the community was complete again, all together in Boxtel.

Sr. Catrien was a very gentle, kind and sweet sister, who liked to chat and enjoyed having people around her. She often came downstairs from her department to be with her fellow Sisters. She didn't talk much about her past missionary work, modest as she was. She never bothered to write down her life story. However, she loved playing cards and did so fanatically until the end. In the evening she liked to drink a glass of white wine.

Lately, she increasingly suffered from an auto-immune disease, which caused her to spend more time in bed and feel very tired. The day after her last card game downstairs in the community, she became very ill and could no longer get out of bed. Four days later she died peacefully in the presence of two caretakers. She was able to consciously experience the anointing of the sick the day before.

Dear Catrien, we will miss you. Rest in the Eternal Peace of the Lord. Amen.

Condolences from Lilongwe:

We received a sincere condolence from the community of Lilongwe: "to join us in our prayer for the soul of Sr. Catherina Boonman."

"We want to thank God for her life on earth, and for what she meant to us and all those who knew her. By our faith, we believe that she contemplates the face of the Risen Christ in the kingdom of God. I, Hortencia, met sister Catrien in the 90s in Malawi when I was aspiring to join our Congregation. I met her shortly at the next visit. What touched me of her presence in the community that was a simple and joyful presence. This memory challenges me on how I live and treat people that I meet on my way. I am very sure that she touched many people in Malawi through her missionary work but mostly by her simple and joyful presence. May she have the joy she has of tasting the LIFE she has aspired to since her baptism. May her soul rest in peace and may she obtain comfort and hope for all. REST IN PEACE SISTER CATHARINA".