

# **Sister Maria Johanna Schoorlemmer (Lebuine)**

**Deceased on 21th January 2024 in Boxtel, The Netherlands**

**At the age of 93**

**Born on 22nd September 1931 in Raalte, The Netherlands**

**First Profession on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1953 in Esch, The Netherlands**

Sister Maria was very tired for a long time and desired very much to go to the Lord. After an unfortunate fall in her room, she died peacefully a few days later.

Maria came from a large catholic family with 6 boys and 4 girls in Heeten (municipality of Raalte). Her parents had a farm with dairy cows. As the eldest of the family, she knew how to handle things at an early age.

The school was far away. Many times, she has told us how she met a whole bunch of kids, even from the neighbourhood, walking to school early in the morning, helping them to walk. She had already made the sandwiches and put the milk in bottles...

She wanted to learn to sew on the sewing machine, but her mother said she had first to learn how to milk the cows. Maria was given a great social feeling by her parents.

During the war, there were many people hiding in the farm, so as not to be captured and many people who were hungry came asking to get and having food on the farm, and possibly they were given and allowed to sleep in the hay so also to be safe.

Her Father was a member of the town council for the Catholic People's Party and her mother was the Chairwoman of the Farmers' Union.

Maria had actually to go to the Domestic Science school, but she didn't want that. She wanted to go to Africa, just like her cousin Henriette Schoorlemmer, also from Heeten. Her parents gave in and Maria went to the postulate of the White Sisters in Maarn on Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1951 and she made her First Profession in 25-10-1953 and left for Algiers for the International Formation Year. Here she had to learn French.

After learning English in England, she went in October 1955 to Tanzania. She worked at the missions of Kagondo, Tabora and Kigoma for more than 10 years, learning Swahili and Kinyamwesi. She organized women's clubs, was responsible for the house and garden, directed the employees of the diocesan farm and helped in the maternity hospital and the girls' hostel. In 1966 she followed the Third Year in Frascati.

In 1970, she came for vacation and took a course in Urban social development at the International Social School (ISS) in The Hague. "Far too much theory," she said. Maria was simply more of a doer than a thinker. After this, when she was back again in Tanzania, she continued with social-pastoral work in Kigoma and Sumbawanga during the seventies and eighties. She gave catechesis on two secondary schools and to women's groups. She specialized in pastoral theology in Gaba.

She also planted thousands of trees together with various women's groups and with the help of the Tanzanian government. She rode through the villages on her motorcycle to promote the emancipation and economic independence of women. A serious motorcycle accident left her out of action

for some time, but luckily her seriously injured hand was saved thanks to the help of a local nurse. Only much later did she receive a Land Rover from the MIVA and she often drove to 'the big city' for the White Fathers.

In 1986, she returned to the Netherlands for mission animation from the community in Den Bosch. She also took a course at the formation center Kontakt der Kontinenten about mission. However, three years later she returned to Tanzania.

In Dar-es-Salaam she started doing pastoral work, vocational apostolate and catechesis in the large city parish. Here she also distributed the warning leaflets of the "Foundation for Religious Against Trafficking in Women (SRTV), which she herself had translated into 4 languages. She also set up self-sufficient gardens with organized women's groups.

After her final return to the motherhouse Sancta Monica in Esch in 2002, she became a volunteer at SRTV in Den Bosch. When Esch was closed, and after living for some time in the Molenwiek-community in Boxtel, Maria moved to Klooster Terhaghe in Eindhoven in 2007. Here she had a wonderful time together with her fellow sisters and the sisters of Charity of Gent. She cycled a lot with, among others, Sr. Riek van Dijk and was responsible for the mail. In 2020, she had to move to the Smaragd department at the Wereldhuis due to increasing memory problems. Fortunately, the rest of the Eindhoven community was also able to move. So, they came with 6.

Maria's mental and physical health has increasingly deteriorated in recent years. She was exhausted and said more and more often: "I can't anymore...". She still enjoyed singing with a Lady called Denise, visits from her fellow sisters and could still proudly talk about caring for her brothers and

sisters and working on the farm in her youth. She had not forgotten Swahili either.

Maria was a strong, independent, tough and sweet woman, who did a lot of work, both in Africa and in the Netherlands. After an unfortunate fall in her room, she died peacefully a few days later at the age of 92.

She was a real 'doer' who worked with all her heart for the women in Africa and for her fellow sisters. We are grateful that we were able to celebrate her 70th anniversary last year with her and her family in the restaurant of the Worldhouse. Miraculously, she had a good day, so that she could be present herself. Dear Maria, we will miss you. Rest in peace in the Eternal Peace of the Lord. Amen.