

In Memoriam Sr Riek (Hendrika Maria) van Dijk, as read at her funeral on the 3rd of July 2025 in the chapel of the Wereldhuis in Boxtel, NL.

Sister Riek was born in Zwollekerspel (near Zwolle) in a family with 7 children. According to herself, there was a real missionary spirit in their house. There were mission cans for donations and they often received letters from missionaries. This also created the desire for Riek to go to the mission. That's how she ended up with the White Sisters. Her Mulo (secondary school) diploma came in handy.

In 1950 she entered Maarn, then to Sancta Monica monastery in Esch where she made her First Vow in 1952. She did a follow-up training to become a home economics teacher at the JMJ Sisters in Den Bosch and additionally a sewing teacher training at the Franciscan Sisters in Veghel. After a course in English in Liverpool, she was ready to be appointed for Tanzania in 1959.

Riek, then called Sr Christophora, felt at home almost immediately. She loved getting to know another culture and living in an international community with other sisters. She learned Ki Swahili in Mwanza and then went on to teach in Kashozi and Ndala at the domestic science school. Her goal was to teach the girls and women responsibility, dedication and a sense of duty for their future task in family, society and church, as she herself put it.

In 1961, Tanganyika became the independent republic of Tanzania under the leadership of President Nyerere and a lot happened. It was a time of change and progress. The schools were nationalized and intercultural for Catholics, Protestants and Muslim children. There was good mutual cooperation and trust between church and state from which the future of Tanzania could be built, a country without tribal warfare and without war and violence. In 1973, the last schools were also handed over and there were enough African leaders to continue the work, just as Cardinal Lavignerie intended.

After her work at the Teachers Training Centre, Riek wanted to work with the wives of the catechists, but the General Board of the Congregation had another assignment for her. She was appointed to the Provincial Team in Kipalapala, which she would continue to do for six years. After knee surgery in Nairobi, she made a career change and

followed a pastoral training in Eldoret, Kenya. She started a new apostolate in Nkundi, Tanzania. She accompanied the catechists in the various villages in the area and did a lot of home visits and religious instruction. They were wonderful years, as she described.

Unfortunately, in '83 she developed health problems that forced her to return to the Netherlands. She lived in Huize Steenwijk in Vught with the Brothers of Tilburg and in Sancta Monica in Esch, where she subsequently became superior. In 1990, she finally learned that she had MS, which caused her world to collapse. She could not return to Africa. After a senior session in Frascati near Rome, she had an inspiration that made her life meaningful again: she started and supervised Bible groups. She has done this with great pleasure for 12 years and it has enriched her a lot.

In 2004 she moved to Terhaghe Monastery in Eindhoven together with a number of fellow sisters, because the house in Esch was closed. Riek said she could be a missionary anywhere. In 2020, she moved to the Wereldhuis in Boxtel, because the sisters from Eindhoven needed more care. In 2022, we celebrated her 70th profession here extensively.

Sister Riek was a very amiable sister, who was very down-to-earth, balanced and sensible. She had a clear vision and rock-solid belief in the goals of the Congregation and in which a White Sister could distinguish herself. She stood for frugality, rationality, compassion and always visited sisters who needed it. It was very unfortunate that at the end of her life she got so much pain that it became unbearable even for her. She was really a tough cookie, but now the limit of her body and her illness had been reached. She consciously said goodbye to her fellow sisters and family and then died peacefully on Wednesday morning in the presence of Marie-Louise. May she rest in the Lord's Eternal Peace. We are going to miss you, dear Riek.

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