



Obituary of Sr. M. Richardus Nellissen CPS * 28. Juni 1926 in Sambeek + 13. April 2020 in Helmond

Sister Richardus, Maria Petronella Nellissen, was born on June 28, 1926, in Sambeek, not far from Oploo, in the province of Noord-Brabant, Netherlands. It was not an easy time, and in the rapidly growing extended family, which would eventually number fifteen children, Maria was actively involved in caring for the many young children and in working on the farm in Oploo. Because of the Second World War and the many jobs at home, she was not able to receive much schooling. However, she knew how to tackle her work, was very practical and lived frugally.

She was attracted early to the religious life, but she waited until she was no longer needed at home and then joined the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood in Tienray on October 15, 1948. On May 2, 1950 she was admitted to the novitiate and received the name Sr. Richardus. On November 21, 1951, she made her first profession in Tienray and soon after received her missionary assignment to the then Belgian Congo. On September 7, 1952 she left for Bamanja, where she was assigned to work on the farm. From 1962 on she worked, on several stations for a few years, in Imbonga, Bokuma, Boteka and from 1976 on again in Bamanja. Each time she worked on the farm, mainly with the pigs, and in the household. After farming was abandoned, she took care of the old people in Bamanja.

On 29 September 1991 she returned to Tienray in the Netherlands, where she helped in the infirmary. When the sisters from Tienray moved in groups to the Missieklooster Heilig-Blut in Aarle-Rixtel, she helped wherever she could and came to Heilig-Blut herself on 1 October 2003. She was very helpful in the kitchen and worked mainly in the so-called "cold kitchen". During the first years she also helped in the kitchen of the infirmary. For many years it was impossible to imagine the kitchen without her. After the prayer at the beginning of the working day, she always wished the staff members "strength"! She had her own way of working and took her duties seriously: washing apples and tomatoes, refilling curd cheese; everything in her own specific way! She was warm, smiling and loved to speak her dialect with the staff.

Even when she actually could no longer do much, she continued to help in the garden, sweeping paths, helping to decorate and clean the Lourdes Grotto and taking care of the cross on the veranda. For some time she found a rollator as practical as a wheelbarrow!

In the house and at table she saw everything and was very attentive; and every evening she could be found in the chapel. She also had some other hidden activities and hobbies, so she repaired rosaries and for a long time she made her own silver wire rosaries for sale at the gate.

Deeply attached to her large, sociable family, she always looked forward to the holidays, but was also always happy to be back. When the family came to visit, they all came together and they played cards. She usually won at cards!

Her health deteriorated. However, since she had had little or no physical pain throughout her life, it only slowly became clear how ill she was. She seemed to have colon cancer, and when it became clear that surgery would not bring relief, it was very difficult for her. However, she remained part of the community, now in a wheelchair, both during recreation and in the chapel, until she too was infected with Covid 19 – Coronavirus at the same time as Sr. Anno and Sr. Roselien tested positive. She was quite well for a while, and in the isolation of the Corona Ward in Helmond she could sometimes talk on the phone with her family and sisters until, very tired, she only slept. On April 13 she died in the afternoon in the presence of a pastoral worker.

Sr. Richardus was modest, she had an inner simplicity and a deep connection with God. Once four young ladies came to visit us and wanted to know more about monastic life. Several sisters talked about their work and life over coffee. Sister Richardus sat there and listened until finally one of the young ladies asked her: "And you, Sister, where have you been, what have you been working on?"

Sr. Richardus answered: "Nothing special". The young ladies insisted and Sr. Richardus said: "I took care of 200 pigs in the Congo". Deeply impressed, the young ladies continued their enquiries and wanted to know what was most important to her in religious life and they received the answer:

"It does not matter what your work is. Do what you can. You see what is needed. God is always there. Look at him, talk to him. This is important".

Dear Sr. Richardus, rest in peace.