

Obituary
Sr. Marije van Diepen
*** 09 December 1926**
† 19 April 2020



Sister Marije van Diepen was born on December 9, 1926, in Zwaag in the Province of North Holland and was given the name Anna Maria at her baptism. She grew up in the middle of nine children of a large family with a horticultural business and came into contact with religious life at an early age.

When she was seven years old, the teacher in the second grade of primary school said goodbye because she joined a missionary congregation. "I want that too!" said little Annie. She kept this up until she was twelve. Then she let go of that thought. When she was fifteen years old and attended the sewing school, this idea came back to her through a photo of her former teacher, who was now a missionary sister in Africa.

But it was a difficult time. It was the Second World War and her father was seriously ill. When she was seventeen years old, her father died, and then, still during the war, she told her mother about her intention.

When she asked the parish priest for information, he gave her a stack of thick books. In between there was a thin booklet with the title "Missionary Sister". "I took this book first, and then I didn't need to look at the others," she wrote to the Missionary Convent in Tienray.

Right after the war she visited Tienray with her mother. She herself describes this journey: "Traveling was very difficult at that time... in Tienray the convent was badly damaged by the war. There was not a single glass in the window frames. Everything was covered with cardboard... We stayed one night... When I received Holy Communion, I knew for sure that I had to enter this convent, this Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood".

On March 19, 1946, Sr. Marije entered Tienray, and on May 1, 1947, she was clothed. She made her First Profession in Tienray on November 21, 1948. Immediately afterwards she was assigned to Horst, where she helped in the care of old and sick people. From May 1950 she was in Nijmegen, where she first received her MULO Diploma and then her certificate of competence in useful handicrafts for primary education. It was during this period that she made her Final Vows on 21 November 1951, in Tienray.

In February 1953, Sr. Marije was transferred to Tienray, where she taught needlework in the primary school and also took care of the laundry in the convent. She received her mission assignment for Indonesia, and although the visa was applied for, in August 1953 she fell ill and the political situation changed so much that the travelling had to be cancelled. In 1955 another missionary post was considered and she was allowed to take a course in tropical medicine, but again it did not materialize.

This was difficult for her, but she continued to enjoy her work in the Netherlands; first in Nijmegen at the Nursing Centre, where she was allowed to attend further training courses: bookkeeping, commercial calculations, typing, the Mulo and the diploma as a teacher of religion in primary schools. From September 1971 she worked in the administration in Huize Berkele Heem in Horst and from October 1, 1972 as procurator of the Dutch Province and in the Mission Procure in Tienray.

During this time in the early nineties, she also attended a German language course. She stayed in Tienray until the Convent was sold in 2003 and came to Aarle-Rixtel on 1 October 2003, where she initially worked in the guest department and was actively involved in the organisation of celebrations. She loved to act, preferably the more austere characters, and for many years she also organised with great pleasure the famous St. Nicholas feast in the Netherlands, where her long tall stature was well displayed in the bishop's clothes of St. Nicholas!

From 2013 on her health deteriorated a little and prayer became her most important task. However, she continued to enjoy performing at feasts, and until shortly before her death, she taught her fellow sisters the Dutch language. Every morning, weather permitting, she would walk to the cross at the end of the path in the convent garden. "I'm going to pray the Way of the Cross," she would say.

She enjoyed celebrating her jubilee, which was attended by so many family members, and her birthdays. Her large family was scattered over many countries and she proudly followed the development and lives of all the family members, and was always happy when they came to visit.

When Sr. Marije became ill, it was not immediately clear that she would not be able to defeat the corona virus. Firm and strong-willed, she seemed to overcome the illness at first. However, after she was back on her feet for a while, she got a fever again and her condition worsened. She died on April 19, 2020, the Sunday of Mercy.

May she rest in peace.