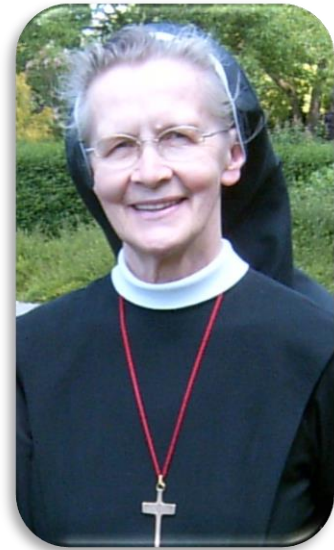


Obituary
of
Sr. M. Godelieve Schouten
* 5 September 1935
† 11 June 2020



Sr. Godelieve was born on 5 September 1935 in Sijbekarspel near Benningbroek in the Province of Noord-Holland. She was the eldest girl in a family with twelve children. On 6 September she was baptized and received the baptismal names Maria Catharina. In the large family her name was soon abbreviated to the nickname 'Miep'. During the difficult years of the war, people from the big city often came to the farms in search of food. After school, she helped out with the large family, but most of all she enjoyed helping her father on the farm, and in Wognum she first followed a lingerie sewing course and then a costume sewing course, which she both successfully completed in 1950.

From 1929 to 1949 the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood worked in Hoorn, in the Saint Boniface Missionary House of the Fathers of Mill Hill. In addition, two of her aunts had become Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood. This is how Miep got to know the Congregation from an early age. A few months after her 21st birthday she entered the Missionary Sisters at the Convent St. Joseph in Tienray on November 7, 1957. She started her novitiate on August 21, 1958 and she received the name of her aunt, who had died in 1949: Sr. Godelieve. Shortly after the start of the novitiate year her father died through an accident on the motorcycle. That was very difficult for her and she always remained grateful that she was then allowed to go home to bury her father.

On February 11, 1960, she made her first profession in Tienray and at first worked in the laundry and ironing room. After her Final Vows 11 February 1963, she received the missionary appointment for Congo, Zaire. The journey was difficult and long! Days on the river, sitting on rice and sugar bags, but in the end, she arrived in Imbonga, where she worked in the house, garden and farm. When she was asked if she could drive a car, the answer came "No, but I drive a tractor". She tackled everything, with the new MIVA jeep; helping with vaccination programs, with the lepers, but also in the house and garden. After a number of years, she returned briefly to the Netherlands for a course in tropical medicine. Then she alternately worked again in Imbonga, then Bamanya, Bokuma, Flandria/Boteka and again in Bamanya, each time in house and garden. After a stay of almost a year in Europe in 1977-1978, during which she followed a French course in Brussels, she returned to Bamanya, where she worked, when necessary, also in the procura, and did some shopping, run errands, etc. by jeep. She drove herself and enjoyed it very much.

Although the climate was difficult for her, she remained in Bamanya, until in 1987 the Archbishop of Mbandaka, Monsignor Etsou, asked for two sisters to take care of a house for the Diocese of Mbandaka/Bikoro in Kinshasha. That house was meant to support the life of the diocese in the interior, to enable better contacts with other dioceses, actually to be a basis for the diocese, so that it could function better in the interior. Sr. Godelieve was at home in all markets, and so she moved with Sr. Salome to Kinshasha to the "Procure" in the seventh street in Limete! Later, the Sisters were praised by Monsignor Etsou's successor, Archbishop Kumuondala, for their willingness to go where no one goes.

In September 1991 Sister Godelieve returned to the Netherlands because of the unrest in the country. She worked first for a few years in Tienray with the laundry and housekeeping, and from February 1994 in the Saint John's Centre, the seminary for priests in 's-Hertogenbosch, where she stayed until the departure of the Sisters in September 2007. The priest students and teachers loved her dry humour, and her practical skills came in handy. However, she did not drive anymore; the traffic in the Netherlands was too busy for her.

In 2007 she came to "Heilig Blood" in Aarle-Rixtel, during the first years mainly as a helper with the guest ward and from 2015 on as a laundry assistant. Her green fingers were outstanding; she took care of the plants and flowers, especially the orchids. Many plants that had been given up, blossomed under her fingers.

Her health slowly deteriorated. She had the Parkinson's disease, but in 2017 she also had to undergo surgery for an intestinal closure. She recovered but remained vulnerable, which was not so visible due to her nice straight posture and the twinkle in her eyes. In general, she stayed in the infirmary but could enjoy walks to the garden and on special occasions she liked to join the community during recreation. The rapid death of the sisters in April of this year, including two sisters with whom she had worked in 's-Hertogenbosch, touched her deeply. No one could then expect that she would follow so quickly. On June 7th she was admitted to the hospital. After an examination it appeared that she had another bowel closure and that an operation would not help her this time. We were happy for her that it was possible to fulfil her wish to return to her own room, away from the hospital. Her condition deteriorated rapidly and on Thursday, June 11th, the Lord called her home.

Sr. Godelieve, thank you for everything - rest in peace.