

Life and Death of our Sr. Bernolda Riedl, OSB



23 October 1917 – 12 November 2009

“I am the handmaid of the Lord! My soul rejoices in God my Saviour!”

Sr. Bernolda was born in Dillishausen, Diocese of Augsburg/Germany on the 23rd of October 1917. She was baptized “Josefa” on the 28th of October 1917, and grew up in a good Christian family, together with 11 siblings, 6 boys and 5 girls.

Her Father, Josef Riedl, was a farmer; her mother’s name was Karoline Riedl, born Fipper. Two of her brothers died during the Second World War.

Two of her Sisters entered the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing: Sr. Consilia, who lived and died in Tutzing in 1967 and Sr. Anne, who was missioned in America and died in Norfolk, Nebraska in 2008. One of her brothers became a Priest: Fr. Heinrich Riedl, who is still alive.

Josefa worked in a hospital in Waal till 1940.

She entered in Tutzing during the Second World War on the 05th of November 1940. On the 21st of March 1941, she became a Postulant. During her Postulancy, she studied Nursing in Munich-Schwabing. On the 29th of June 1943, she became a Novice in St. Ottilien. After the world war, Sr. Bernolda made her First Profession in Tutzing on the 02nd of February 1946, and her Final Profession on the 02nd of May 1949.

From 1949 to 1951, Sr. Bernolda was assigned in Wessobrun and served as a nurse.

She was sent as a Missionary to Windhoek/Namibia and was assigned in the Roman Catholic Hospital till 1956. From September 1956 till April 1990, she lived, prayed and worked in Oshikuku/Owamboland, where she served as a nurse and midwife. The name Kapika ka

Owambo was given to her because she worked so hard in St. Martin Hospital in Oshikuku day and night. Kapika means “slave”.

One Sister wrote about Sr. Bernolda: “There is no bird who does not know “Kapika”. More than 20 baby girls in Owamboland have been named “Bernolda” after her. As a midwife, she delivered the incumbent Archbishop Liborius Ndumbukuti Nashenda of Windhoek. After his birth, Sr. Bernolda made immediately a sign of the cross on his forehead and said: “You should become a Priest!”

Everything she did as a Nursing-Sister was done in a kind and friendly way, correctly and punctually. There was no patient who died without seeing a priest. She taught the Sisters and young Owambo-girls how to serve the sick with their whole heart day and night. It was through her that the others learned how to use herbal medicine for treating skin-diseases and wounds. She taught them how to clean the hospital rooms and the areas, how to repair mattresses and even how to paint the walls in the wards and many other things. Besides General Nursing, Sr. Bernolda opened a leprosy ward and cared for the lepers with much love. She made a beautiful garden around the leprosy-building and planted mango, lemon, and guava-trees. That little place was like a paradise. Sr. Bernolda spent time with the lepers and was not afraid to wash their wounds. She celebrated the presence of God in everything she did. One Sister wrote: “As a young girl I was attracted by Sr. Bernolda’s good deeds of love, patience, humility and kindness, especially toward the sick and the poor. I have learned a lot from her and she promoted my vocation through all that I have seen with my own eyes.”

In 1990, Sr. Bernolda was transferred to Andara/Kavango till 1992. Thereafter, she stayed in Windhoek.

Even in her old age, she gave to all of us a friendly smile. By her smiling face she told us that she loved us all. She was grateful, prayerful and simple. She liked to pray and sing with the community up to her last weeks, when she suddenly collapsed in the chapel.

Sr. Bernolda died quietly at the Roman Catholic Hospital, Windhoek in the morning of the 12th of November 2009.

She died peacefully as she has lived peacefully.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit became visible in her life: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.” Gal. 5:22

R.i.p.

Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing,
St. Benedict Priory, Windhoek /Namibia