



Obituary

Sr Celine Nordmann OP

05.02.1926 – 05.07.2022



*Death surrenders us completely to God;
it makes us pass into God.
In return we have to surrender ourselves to it,
in love and in the abandon of love,
since, when death comes to us,
there is nothing further for us to do
but to let ourselves be entirely
dominated and led onwards by God.*

Teilhard de Chardin

On 5 February 1926, a little girl was born to Francisca Agnes and Clemens August Nordmann in Lohne, in the Diocese of Münster (Germany). She was baptised Julia Henrietta. Her mother died when she was only five years old and her father re-married. She had quite a few siblings. Her sister, Maria, is still alive. On finishing school, she looked after her ailing stepmother and younger siblings for six years and then spent two years doing domestic duties and being a shop assistant for a tailor.

Julia entered Neustadt in October 1950 and did her postulancy and noviciate there where she received the name Celine. She made her First Profession in Neustadt on 29 June 1952 and her Final Profession in Oakford on 8 July 1955. Soon after her arrival in Oakford, she was sent to the "St Augustine's Hospital" in Durban and obtained her General Nursing Diploma. She did her midwifery training a few years later at the "Lady Selbourne Hospital" in Pretoria and later still did her training as a theatre nurse at the "Addington Hospital" in Durban.

Her various assignments included caring for girls in our Frankfurt Girls' Hostel for two years before going to South Africa. Then she was in the Oakford Infirmary for a year, Oakford Clinic for another year, 10 years in Marifont - nursing for four years and later as Prioress for six years. She was in Osindisweni for 20 years and spent 10 years caring for old people in Kwa Gertrude at Oakford.

She retired to Villa Siena in 2005 where, after she recovered from surgery, she liked to keep herself active. She sewed, she wrote many letters to friends and family on her much loved and trusted 'Word Processor'. She nurtured plants on her veranda and elsewhere in Villa Siena with care and 'green fingers'. She read a lot and kept herself informed. She had an interest in life and all that was happening around her. She read the paper avidly, asked questions about things she read and didn't understand. When she was no longer able to read, Sr Angela read to her.

Celine nearly died when she had cancer. She was brought to Villa Siena in 2005 to prepare for death. Dr Thompson advised us to keep her comfortable as there was nothing more that could be done for her. With all the special nursing and her determination to fight for life, Celine survived. The fact that she survived was always a source of great joy and gratitude for her. She could retain her independence for a little longer, and independent she was! A few years later she needed to see a doctor and as she entered the doctor's room, he seemed to recognise her, but politely asked after the Sister who had been dying of cancer a few years earlier. Before he could complete his question, she proudly responded: 'Yes, Doctor, that was me!'.

A relatively short while ago, after lunch in the dining room when some Sisters had already left, she said that she wanted to make a speech. She thanked all the Sisters for their love and the Carers for their care and asked forgiveness of anyone she might have hurt.

In 2007, when she was feeling better, she wrote a three-page document entitled: My Last Wishes. In this she tells her family what should be done 'at home' (Lohne) when she dies and who should do it and she hoped they would share the costs as she did not want them to be burdened. There too she thanks everyone for their love, asks to be remembered by those left behind and says that when she dies, she wants to die in peace and so asked forgiveness of those she may have hurt.

What else do we know about this woman Julia Nordmann, Sr Celine? She was a fiercely family orientated person. She kept in close contact with her family and just could not comprehend when the South African postal system collapsed. She telephoned family often to be kept informed of all that was happening 'at home'. Family members came to see her on various occasions, and she kept her interest in all that each one was doing. She was a hard worker and did not spare herself in her service of people entrusted to her care, while also being ambitious. Celine found it extremely difficult when Osindisweni was taken over by the Government.

She was a perfectionist in all she did as a nurse, as a seamstress, with her plants. She was a caring person when she lived in Marifont as Prioress, caring too for late Archbishop Garner with great love and attention. Sr Greta, with whom she is now re-united in eternity, once said that, if she (Greta) were to end up on the operating table, she would want to know that Celine was there in attendance! She was stubborn in her independence and found it really very hard to allow others to do things for her. It was as though she challenged herself to prove to herself that she could still manage.

And at the end, she left us quietly on the evening of Tuesday 5 July. Two carers were with her, and they said she simply took one big breath and was gone. She had 'flu a couple of weeks ago and pulled through (not fully) again, for a couple more weeks.

May God bless all your ways, including the rough ones. May you open yourself to new experiences and insights. May you not be afraid of thick, high walls which threaten to hold you back. May God give you trust to find your way. May God give your strength to take the steps which lead your further in peace and joy.

(Translated from a letter Sr Celine wrote to her family in 2016)

We are grateful for the testimony of Sr Celine's life and trust that she will now be fully united with her God and that she will be our advocate with God.

RIP