

Death Notice

SISTER MARIA STELLA MARIS

Anna ESSELING

ND 4799



Maria Regina Province, Coesfeld / Germany

Date and Place of Birth:	October 5, 1921	Ellewick near Vreden, Germany
Date and Place of Profession:	August 31, 1957	Coesfeld, Liebfrauenburg
Date and Place of Death:	February 14, 2014	Coesfeld, Kloster Annenthal
Date and Place of Funeral:	February 19, 2014	Coesfeld, Convent Cemetery

“My wish was to help my mother and my siblings, to make them happy, and then to ask the Sisters of Notre Dame for admission...” This is what Sister Maria Stella Maris, then Anna Esseling, wrote in her curriculum vitae in the nineteen fifties. She was the fifth child and only 10 years old when her father, Heinrich Esseling, died and her mother, Adelheid Esseling, had to do the work on the family’s farm in Vreden-Ellewick together with her children. Of course it was necessary to help with the work! But, as Anna wrote, she also spent a “happy childhood” with her seven siblings.

After finishing school, she gained a lot of practical experience by working on her parental farm and in different households of her relatives. Moreover, she discovered that she liked domestic work. “Deep piety” marked the life of the Esseling family, as the parish priest at that time wrote. This might have caused Maria’s decision for religious life. She knew the Sisters by many encounters and by their ministry.

So she entered the novitiate in Coesfeld at the age of 33. After her religious formation, she did the domestic work at the Liebfrauenstift, a hall of residence in Münster. From 1960 on, her ministry was concentrated more and more on cooking, baking, and working in the kitchen. She worked in the kitchens of children’s homes and boarding-schools and in 1979, she received the qualification as a master in domestic science.

Since then, she daily cooked for her co-sisters as well as for hungry guests and continually offered cookery courses. In Ramsdorf and in Warstein she instructed trainees in cooking, housekeeping, gardening, and doing the laundry. She was not only engaged in her practical ministry but she was also deeply committed to the spiritual life of the community. Her personal faith, her positive approach to life, and her gratitude were very convincing. Some members of the parish being interested, she asked the provincial leadership also to offer cookery courses for men. First, a team of two sisters offered courses for men on a trial basis. The response of the new members and the experience with them were very positive and encouraging. Sr. M. Stella Maris’ cookery course for men became a regular event shaped by a joyful and hearty atmosphere – like in her convent kitchens.

In November 1988, Sr. M. Stella Maris fell down the high and steep stairs in the house in Warstein. Thank God, the consequences were not too bad: she “only” broke both her wrists. Supported by many sisters and friends, she overcame her shock and her pain by her strong confidence in God and by her self-discipline.

Sr. M. Stella Maris maintained close contacts with her family. Even after the death of her siblings she remained closely connected to her nephews, nieces, great-nieces and great-nephews, sharing their joys and their suffering.

Sister Stella Maris’ gratitude was very impressive. She did not forget what she considered a gift and repeatedly thanked for it. Obviously, gratitude has often been the content of her prayer, gratitude for a fulfilled life. One of her last hardly intelligible words was ‘Thank you!’ Let us thank God for her, who has lived for us and with us for such a long time!