

Death Notice

SISTER MARIA HILTGARDIS

ND 3596

Magdalena Elizabeth Maria Spielhoff



Nossa Senhora Aparecida Province, Canoas, RS - Brazil

Date and place of birth:	July 23, 1915	Essen-Rellinghausen - Germany
Date and place of profession:	July 05, 1938	Passo Fundo, RS, Brazil
Date and place of death:	January 25, 2017	Recanto Aparecida, Canoas, RS, Brazil
Date and place of burial:	January 26, 2017	Convent Cemetery, Canoas, RS, Brazil

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. Phil 4:13

Sister Maria Hiltgardis completed her earthly journey on January 25, 2017, the Feast of St. Paul Apostle, to whom she was a great devotee. The quote from Phil 4:13 is a synthesis of her life: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”.

Magdalena Spielhoff was born on July 23, 1915 in Essen-Rellinghausen, Germany. Her parents Ernest Spielhoff and Ida Wacker were practicing Catholics. They loved social life and cultivated deep friendships. The Spielhoff family was blessed with four children. Magdalena was the youngest. She was born during World War I, to which her father was summoned. One of her brothers died in Russia in the World War II.

When she was 14 years old, she climbed a 2,300m high mountain. She wrote: “I was enraptured by so much beauty! God took care of me. This presence of the Great God permeates my life both in joyful times as in the days of darkness, doubts and inner struggles”.

Magdalena, even as a young woman thought about becoming a nun. She asked to be admitted to the Benedictine Sisters in Germany. When she learned that they had missions in Africa, she reconsidered her decision. “I want to go to Brazil, the country of my dreams ever since a young age. Then I chose the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame”. In 1936, she began her novitiate in Mülhausen, receiving the name Sister Maria Hiltgardis. She achieved her great missionary dream arriving in Brazil on January 24, 1938, as a 2nd year novice.

From the year 1939 on, she devoted her life to education, ministering as a teacher, principal and formation directress. Open to the world and a lover of liberty, Sister’s horizon was broad and could not conceive an education that did not prepare open minded, well educated and wise adults, which included art, beauty and faith in their adulthood. She knew how to integrate faith and culture. She said that “for a great God, we need to form great men and women, according to the Creator’s project”.

From October 1977 to February 1984, as Provincial Superior she led Nossa Senhora Aparecida Province with a firm hand and a generous heart. When finishing her term Sister said: “I always tried to do the best for the Congregation, the Province and each sister, as it was my duty”.

Since 1984, she dedicated herself to the translation of Congregational books – German to Portuguese. She loved art and literature especially biographies of great personalities. Reading about influential women were her favorites. She bought books and encouraged others to read by lending the books to them. She used to contemplate artwork and was absorbed by the beauty of devoting herself in body and soul to this culture. Whenever possible, Sister visited art exhibitions and museums. She was acknowledged for her wisdom and greatness of soul. She received public tributes as Citizen of Canoas, Honorary Gaucha in Porto Alegre, Picucha Milanez Prize and Pinto Bandeira medal.

In her old age, the Great God, as her great teacher and pedagogue educated her for a complete surrender. When her eyesight faded, her hearing decreased and the physical movements were debilitated, she said: “God is educating me gradually. I have never experienced a lack of successes and failures: they polished and encouraged me to seek the deep meaning of my life”.

In her autobiography, we read “Today I do not need anything except to thank God for all that I have received, both in the parental home and in religious life”.