

Death Notice

SISTER MARIA GRATIA

Maria GROOT-BERNING

ND 5666



Maria Regina Province, Coesfeld / Germany

Date and Place of Birth:	21 July 1934	Großemast near Vreden
Date and Place of Profession:	15 August 1964	Coesfeld
Date and Place of Death:	20 September 2026	Coesfeld, Kloster Annenthal
Date and Place of Funeral:	24 September 2026	Coesfeld, Convent Cemetery

Maria Groot-Berning grew up with her five siblings, lovingly cared for by her parents, Gerhard Groot-Berning and his wife Johanna (née Feldbrack). Her parents ran a farm. Maria attended the Catholic elementary primary and secondary school in Großemast and graduated in 1950 with good grades. In the years that followed, she helped out on her parents' farm until she was hired as an apprentice cook at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent in Vreden from 1958 to 1959. There, she received thorough training in all areas of home economics. The superior at the time wrote in her recommendation: "Miss Groot-Berning was always honest, friendly, and willing to take on any task. We can recommend her in every respect and wish her all the best for the future." After this time at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent, Maria remained at home for two more years until she entered our congregation in October 1961. On August 18, 1962, she was invested and received her religious name, Sister Maria Gratia. After her first profession in 1964, she came to the Pius College in Coesfeld and served in a leadership role in housekeeping until she travelled to Rome in 1969 for her tertianship, where she made her perpetual profession in July.

She then served in Büren and at the Liebfrauenstift in Gelsenkirchen. At the Meinwerk Institute in Paderborn, she received thorough training as a housekeeper, and in 1988 she passed the certification exam to become a trainer. For 33 years, Sister Maria Gratia worked with all her strength and joy in the kitchen and in other areas of the Liebfrauenstift senior care center in Gelsenkirchen, until she was diagnosed with early-stage dementia and, with a heavy heart, had to let go of her beloved place of ministry.

She moved to Kloster Annenthal in 2008 and assisted with housekeeping duties on the Salus wards. Her cheerful, sunny disposition, her kindness, and the simplicity with which she interacted with us were exemplary. She always looked forward to visits from home, even as communication became more difficult over time. As her dementia progressed, she grew to love being in the company of others more and more. She enjoyed being outdoors and, for as long as she was able, would accompany a fellow sister in a wheelchair through the park with her walker. A familiar, heartwarming sight. Sister Maria Gratia had a radiant smile, and there was always a twinkle in her eyes. Even long after she lost her ability to converse, she generously showered us with her warmth and affection.

Over time, her strength waned until, one day, she could no longer get out of bed. Even in this final phase of her life, every encounter with her was marked by mutual joy and gratitude. Sister Maria Gratia was lovingly cared for by our nursing and care staff and supported by her fellow sisters.

When Sister Maria Gratia could still speak, as she was being wheeled into the elevator in her wheelchair, she once said, "Are we going to heaven now?" "No, Sr. Gratia, not yet, but someday heaven will come to you."

A former colleague responded to the news of her death: "A kind soul has gone home."