

Now we are going to another part of Africa, to learn of a very important set of apparitions.

Sister Reinolda May was born Oct 21, 1901 and baptized Francisca in Germany. One of eight children she grew up on a farm, a lively and charming child with a strong devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Her parish priest greatly encouraged vocations and she joined the Missionary Benedictine Sisters at Tutzing. She went through a trial of illness then professed her first vows on Feb 10, 1925. Six months after the young woman received the mission cross and left for South Africa. I hope a book comes out on her some day. Probably all of those young European men and women who left their families to be missionaries deserve to be canonized, since most of them died in spirit for the Faith the day got into the boat. Most would never see their families again and most would die very young.

But Sister Reinolda would have a long life of loving service. For three years, while completing her formation she first worked as a seamstress until she made her final vows in 1928. She learned the Zulu language with enthusiasm and in 1936 she was the first Sister in the territory to be trained as a midwife. Two years later, in 1938, the Benedictine Mission Hospital opened in Nongoma and Sister Reinolda was put in charge of the maternity department at Nongoma hospital. This would be located close to Ngome [nah-go-may] where the Benedictines bought an 800 acre farm in 1944. Typical to their charism they used cattle and agriculture as an income to support their ministry. On the property they also erected a small school to give children a basic education. The classroom was used as a chapel where the Catholics came together on Sundays to celebrate Holy Mass or to participate in a service conducted by a catechist.

Sister Reinolda was recognized by her peers for being disciplined, wise, calm, serene, friendly, always smiling, and dedicated to teaching. Her students looked forward to her conferences, where she often improvise to explaining things in the primitive hospital. She took the initiative in problem solving, creative in shaping their style of prayer. She became one of the more renowned among the Catholic missionaries in Zulu land because of her zeal for the people, for the poor, and for drawing in converts. She encouraged many to pray the Rosary and to teach others to do the same.

The Republic of South Africa is the southernmost country on the continent. In 1647 two employees of the Dutch East India Company were shipwrecked at what became Capetown, the turning point for ships rounding the corner as they crossed from Europe to Asia or Asia to Europe. The Dutch colonized the area and it's still the first language. South Africa has eleven official languages, and it recognizes several more. In 1948, the National Party was elected to power. It strengthened the racial segregation begun under Dutch and British colonial rule. The Nationalist Government classified all peoples into three races and developed rights and limitations for each. The white minority (less than 20%) controlled the vastly larger black majority. The legally institutionalized segregation became known as apartheid. Whites enjoyed the highest standard of living in all of Africa, comparable to First World Western nations, and the blacks remained disadvantaged by almost every standard, including income, education, housing, and life expectancy. Under apartheid, the nonwhite majority were forced to live in separate areas from whites and use separate public facilities. Contact between the two groups was limited. Despite strong and consistent opposition to apartheid within and outside of South Africa, its laws remained in effect for fifty years. Undoubtedly, all of this turmoil and injustice had its impact on Sister Reinolda and the people she served, but Mary's messages had nothing to do with politics.

First Encounter: 22nd August 1955. Feast of The Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Shortly after Holy Communion, Mary stood before me, very close-by. Everything was seen in spirit. I was drawn into another atmosphere. Mary showed herself in a wonderful light more beautiful than the sun. She was robed all in white, with a flowing veil from top to toe. Upon her breast rested a very large Host surrounded by a brilliant corona radiating life. She was a living monstrosity. Mary stood upon a globe, hands and feet invisible. I felt like entering a cloud, drawn by Mary, away from the earth. I had my eyes closed but I saw so much light that, for several days, I was very much dazzled by the beauty and light that I had seen.

Mary said the following:

“Call Me ‘*Tabernacle of the Most High*’. You too are such a tabernacle. Believe it. I wish to be called upon by this title for the glory of my Son. I wish that more such tabernacles be prepared. I mean human hearts. I wish that the altars be

surrounded more frequently by praying people. Don't be afraid. Make it known".
To whom? I asked "Don't be afraid. Tell your priest".

2nd and 3rd Encounters

In October 1955, on two separate occasions, Sister Reinolda had similar encounters. It happened immediately after Holy Mass. It was the same figure, the same place, the same requests were repeated but the following was added: "Make these Words known to everybody. Don't be afraid. You are God's tool." Then Christ came out of this large Host and was in union with Sister.

4th Encounter: 15th March 1956.

After Holy Mass, Mary stood before me, looking very serious.

"My child, I know about your anxiety" (She bent down and drew me to herself.) "You asked for a sign?"

Not for myself, I said, but for the others, that they may believe. They do not believe me.

"I wish that a Shrine be erected for me in the place where seven springs come together. There I'll let my graces flow in abundance. Many people shall turn to God."

When I asked "Where is the place?" She made a movement of the hand and pointed majestically upwards in a certain direction. This made me very happy and I felt a great assurance. "Don't be afraid. Make it known. It is my Work. I shall see you again".

5th Encounter: 5th June 1956

On the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Sister Reinolda had another vision. No message was given but Mary revealed herself in a simple yet profound way by coming out of the Monstrance and approached me as a living monstrance.

6th Encounter: 15th March 1957

Mary gave the following message:

"I come to strengthen you. I make use of your nothingness. Be totally humble".

Pausing, She drew me to herself and said: "I want to save the world through the Host, my fruit. I am completely One with the Host as I was One with Jesus under the Cross. Fearful things are in store for you unless you [all] convert."

"We?" "Yes, if the religious do not convert and if the world does not convert"

"Mother, just give me a sign"

"You, be all love and readiness. All people who hear and believe these, my words, are going to receive a sign from me. Make all these words known."

7th Encounter: 24th May 1957

In a comforting voice: "Don't loose heart!"

(In December 1957 when visiting Ngome, Sister Reinolda got a strong urge that this was the place Our Lady wanted her shrine erected, the place where seven springs met.)

8th Encounter: 17th April 1958

Like a command, Mary said: "Go to your place. Hurry up, the hour is advanced. I must keep back the streams of grace with force because you do not make any effort to help me. I am asking for help from you, my chosen ones."

"What are we supposed to do?"

"Be hosts. Prepare hosts for Me. Hosts who put themselves completely at my disposal. Only a flaming sea of hosts can drive back the hate of the godless world and restrain the angry hand of the Father. Don't get tired. I find consolation in revealing myself to you. I shall never abandon you."

"Where is the place of the springs?"

"On your property, on the mountain".

With a movement of the hand Mary indicated, a second time, the very same direction. “Don’t be afraid. Make haste to make it known!”

A picture of “Mary Tabernacle of the Most High” was painted and it hung in the classroom until 1966 when a small chapel was built and blessed on the Ngome farm in the area where the seven springs were situated. The chapel was opened and consecrated on Pentecost Sunday.

Twelve years later—9th Encounter: 23rd March 1970

It was the second night after a horrible appearance of the devil. I was woken from my sleep. All around me was light. Mary, Tabernacle of the Most High, stood beside me. She took me into her arms and consoled me. She said:

“I know about your anxiety. I stand by you. I shall not abandon you. Look to the other side.”

There stood St. Michael in armor and a lance in his hands. On his right stood a cherubim robed in white, his arms folded. After about two minutes they disappeared and so did the brilliant light. This was a great consolation for me.

10th Encounter: 2nd May 1971

Shortly before I left [Ngome, after a visit there] I went again to the chapel with a small group of women. A catechumen said she wants to believe, but complained of neighbor calling her names and quarreling. I prayed aloud with the women and asked Mary to help this woman and to convert this troublemaker. Suddenly I noticed that the picture was very much alive. She stepped forward and her face was immensely beautiful. In my excitement I shouted: “Look at Mary”. I am convinced that the women too saw Mary. I personally was so moved that I walked away silently. The same troublesome man asked the priest for pardon and since then there is peace.

At age 74 in 1975, Sister Reinolda celebrated her fiftieth anniversary as a Benedictine nun and retired from her position as head of the maternity department. She devoted the last 8 years of her life to visiting the sick, comforting the dying and reconciling them with the Church. She died April 1, 1981 at the missionary station near the Inkamana Abbey. Her funeral was attended by an unusually large number of mourners.

Ecclesiastical approval was surely hampered by the political turmoil in the country, but Ngome was not forgotten. Far from it! It attracted more and more pilgrims. There were healings and testimonies of spiritual rejuvenation at the springs. On Saturday, October 3, 1992, Bishop Mansuet Biyase blessed the open-air altar. The bishop celebrated Holy Mass with several hundred pilgrims who had come from the Diocese of Eshowe and from farther away. He used this opportunity to declare the Marian Shrine at Ngome a place of prayer. Ngome had thus become, to all intents and purposes, a sanctuary of Our Lady which has the approval of the Church. It meant that pilgrimages to Ngome were not merely allowed but could be actively promoted.

In 1994, Bishop Rowland blessed a statue of Our Lady, Tabernacle of the Most High, then a new crucifix and new painting of Our Lady to be displayed in the small shrine. In 1996 the bishop also blessed a new grotto and statue of Our Lady.

In 1997, Benedictine Nuns from Twasana moved into a new convent that had been built alongside the Ngome Shrine. As a “community of adoration” their main apostolate was to become prayer (with a special focus on adoration of the Blessed Sacrament) and care of the pilgrims.