

Commemoration in the convent Mariënpoel: prayer and politics

The convent Mariënpoel

Escape from Oudewater

The nuns of the Ursula convent in Oudewater were forced to leave town in March 1428 because of a combination of political conflicts. The Hook faction of Jacqueline of Bavaria fought Philip the Good and his Cod faction for the power in Holland and Zeeland (1425-July 1428).

At the same time Zweder van Kuilenburg and Rudolf van Diepholt and their parties contested the bishopric of Utrecht (the Utrecht Schism, 1423-1449). Philip the Good sided with the Pope, who had appointed Zweder bishop. The convents of the Modern Devotion, to which the Ursula convent belonged, also adhered to the decision of the Pope.

Oudewater, where the nuns lived, and the towns of Gouda and Schoonhoven were important Hook strongholds. Therefore, when in 1427 Jacqueline of Bavaria's faction and these three towns took the side of Rudolf van Diepholt, the nuns felt compelled to leave their town.

As a high official of the County of Holland Boudewijn van Zwieten sided with Philip the Good. Therefore he did not found a completely new convent, but a convent for nuns whom he considered the victims of Philip's opponents.

The foundation of Mariënpoel

The foundation of a convent was a complicated matter. Land and buildings had to be obtained, the ecclesiastical and secular authorities needed to grant permission, and the founder's family had to agree as well, because they would lose part of the family fortune.

The founding arrangements for Mariënpoel were made between 1428 and 1431. The parish priest of Oegstgeest consented to arrangements regarding the spiritual care for the nuns; this agreement was confirmed by bishop Zweder. Boudewijn's children agreed to the foundation as well.

Throughout the existence of a convent donations such as money and land remained an essential source of income, enabling the conventuals to perform the services required by their benefactors. Some convents became quite rich. This seems to have been the case for Mariënpoel too.

The organization of the convent and order

Like the old convent in Oudewater, Mariënpoel was a convent of Regular Canonesses. This meant that the sisters followed the rule of St. Augustine.

The prioress was the head of the community, while the rector and one or more socii (companions, who were also priests) were responsible for the nuns' spiritual guidance. These priests were Canons Regular, either from the Chapter of Sion, to which Mariënpoel belonged, or from the Chapter of Windesheim.

These two chapters were umbrella organisations of convents for men and women that had chosen the rule of St. Augustine as their guiding principle. Representatives met once a year to discuss matters concerning organisation and statutes. Visitators examined the observance of the rule and statutes in the convents.

The founder's wishes

The foundation charter of February 2, 1431, shows that Boudewijn van Zwieten intended the convent to be dedicated to St. Mary, as the name Mariënpoel suggests. He made a large number of demands on the new institution.

The number of choir nuns (professider nonnen) was not to exceed forty, and a maximum number of ten lay sisters was allowed for housekeeping and dealing with the outside world.

Another requirement was a limit to the nuns' income. To prevent them from living in luxury any surplus income was to be yielded to the visitators, who would hand it out to "religious persons who needed it". The founder also made arrangements for his salvation and that of his family.

150 peaceful years

For almost 150 years the nuns lived in peace, using the donations of land and money to meet the costs of living, maintain the buildings and sing the glory of God day and night. Even the iconoclastic outbreak of 1566 left the convent untouched. However, Mariënpoel met its end in 1572.

In this year the town of Leiden declared the "reformed" religion to be the public religion from then on. The "catholic" institutions, including Mariënpoel, were dissolved. In 1573 the government of Leiden had the convent pulled down, to prevent the Spanish troops from using the buildings as they laid siege to the town.

The church

The consecration of the church

The church was consecrated on July 20, 1430. It had only one altar. This altar was probably dedicated to the Virgin Mary, just like the convent itself. Three more altars were consecrated in 1457.

The donations register of Mariënpoel shows that the convent received many gifts for the church throughout the years: liturgical objects, such as chalices; paraments for the priests to wear during liturgical services; works of art, and other objects. Donors were family of the nuns, such as members of the Van de Boekhorst and the Van Zaers families, as well as "business relations" of benefactors.

The church as the heart of daily life

The church was the heart of the convent. Here the nuns worshipped and attended Mass. The main task for the community was praying for their deceased sisters and benefactors, and singing the Divine Office. The Divine Office, also known as the "seven hours", were chanted at fixed times of the day and night, each and every day of the year.

Other ceremonies were the taking of vows and the profession of the nuns, the celebrations to commemorate the consecration of the church and its altars, the death and burial rituals and the commemorative services.

The convent owned several manuscripts with descriptions of the rituals to be performed at death and burial. The *Agenda mortuorum* (end of fifteenth century and ca. 1550) lists the tasks of the priests. Two other manuscripts must have been the counterpart of this handbook, for they describe the tasks of the sacristan during these rituals and services (Coster boeck, ca. 1500, additions ca. 1565-1572; Costerinne boeck, ca. 1550-1571).

The nuns' choir

The nuns of Mariënpoel belonged to a contemplative order. After having taken the vows they were almost completely cut off from the outside world. As a consequence the church building was provided with a nuns choir, an additional floor over the nave of the church which enabled the nuns to attend the liturgical services separate from the lay people. We do not know, however, to which extent the nuns used the The nuns choir; only a limited number of people were officially allowed to enter the convent, including the bishop, the sovereign, the convent founder, and the visitors.

Graves in the choir

Burial places in the choir were especially sought after. Firstly, being buried close to any altar was beneficial for the soul, because altars contained the relics of saints. The saints were considered important mediators between God and mankind. Secondly, at the high altar in the choir many masses were celebrated; attending Mass was also good for both the living and the dead.

According to the sacristan's book (Coster boeck; from 1500) of Mariënpoel the grave of the founder's family was situated in front of the altar. The convent's priests (rectors and socii, paters) were laid to rest on the right hand side of the altar (the left side, as seen from the nave). We know from other documents that the prioresses' grave was located on the - less important - left hand side of the altar.

Apart from these, two other burial places are mentioned on the choir: that of the Utrecht canon Michiel Michielsz. van Helmond (†1558) and that of the priest Jacob Tollenaar (†1532) "and his friends". Both priests were important benefactors of the convent.

Left: According to the sacristan's book the following persons had a grave in the choir of the convent church: the Van Zwieten family, the rectors, and two benefactors who were both priests.

Mary with Child and Prayer Portraits of the Van Zwieten Family

The Mariënpoel convent

Mariënpoel, a convent of Canonesses Regular, was founded in 1428 by Boudewijn van Zwieten for nuns who had fled their convent in Oudewater due to political conflicts.

A memorial for the founder and his family

To commemorate the founder and his family a memorial was placed near the family grave on the choir of the convent church, about 1454. The original work of art is lost, but the copy of 1552 still exists. Boudewijn van Zwieten is kneeling at the place of honour, on the (heraldic) right hand side of St. Mary and the Christ Child.

The memorial painting of the Van Zwieten family

The Virgin Mary sits enthroned amidst the portrayed Van Zwieten family, holding the Christ Child. Boudewijn van Zwieten is kneeling on her right hand side, and his wife Ludgard van Nijenrode kneels to her left.

Canvas, 129,5 x 385 cm; 1552; artist: P.S. (Pieter Willemsz. Sluyter?). Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden

Four generations in the memorial painting of 1552

The present Van Zwieten memorial presents four generations, but the third and fourth generations shown are exclusively from the branch of Johanna van Zwieten, who commissioned the painting. This is one of the indications that the old memorial showed only two generations of the family.

To include Johanna's branch in the new memorial a major change had to be made. It is very likely that Immesoete van de Marck had been represented in the old memorial, because when this work of art was made she was married to Johanna's grandfather.

Johanna, however, needed the portrait of Catharina van de Abeele to be included, her grandfather's first wife, as Catharina was her grandmother (†1442).

If this is correct, strictly speaking another portrait should have been replaced too, for in 1451 Johanna's grandaunt Aleid married her second husband, Everhard of Bavaria.

Johanna may have felt that his portrait did not need to be replaced by that of Aleid's first husband, Claas van Diepenburg (†1440). For her it may have mattered only to have her direct ancestors depicted correctly.

Portraits missing

Johanna did not have all direct family members painted, perhaps because she considered herself and her brother to be the last members of their branch. Her sister, Josina, was married, but being a woman she could not continue the family line. And Josina's son, Johanna's nephew Jan, had died too young to have children.

Care for the here and the hereafter in the painting

The culture of memoria consisted of combinations of religious-liturgical, social, historical, historiographical, and legal and political components. Thus the concerns of life on earth and the care for the hereafter were inseparably intertwined.

Memorial pieces show combinations of these components, as do other expressions of memoria, like texts and rituals. In the Van Zwieten memorial three aspects can be easily detected.

The religious component

In the painting the family kneels for the Virgin and Child, showing themselves to be good Christians and setting an example. Prayers such as "May God keep his soul", occurring in many memorial pieces, are not included in the texts.

Social components

Johanna, the last living person from her branch of the family, no doubt commissioned the painting to express the bond between her generation and the founder of the convent. The texts show that not all family members were buried in Mariënpoel. Through the painting, however, they attended the liturgical services in the convent church as a family.

Historical and historiographical components

These aspects of the images and the texts refer to the history of the family. The donation of the painting as a replacement for the old memorial is mentioned in the caption below Johanna van Zwieten's portrait.

Perhaps the most important fact is commemorated in the caption for Boudewijn van Zwieten. He is mentioned as the "founder of the convent".

The Texts below the portraits

Jan van Zwieten (†1510)

"Anno M Vc X XIII dagen in augusto starf Jan van Zweten heer van Opmeer zaliger hier begraven tot Sinte Maria poel voor t hoge outaer bij sijn oim."

In the year 1510 on the 13th day of August died Jan van Zwieten, lord of Opmeer, of blessed memory, buried here in Sint Mariënpoel in front of the high altar with his ancestor.

Johanna van Zwieten (†1556)

"Anno M Vc LII voer Kersavont heeft joncfrouwe Johanna van Zweten dochter heeren Adriaens van Zweten ridder doen vernieuwen dit tavereel wanttet van ouderdom al vergaen was. Zij starf anno M Vc ... den ..."

In the year 1552 before Christmas Eve [December 24] had Lady Johanna van Zwieten, daughter of Sir Adriaen van Zwieten, Knight, this painting renewed because it had faded away of old age. She died in the year 15... on ... *(The date of death was provided for, but it has not been filled in.)*

Otte van Egmond (†1485), wife of Adriaan van Zwieten

"Anno M IIIIc LXXXV den XX. dach November starf vrouwe Otte van Egmont huysvrouw heeren Adriaens van Zweten ridder hier begraven bij heer Adriaen van Zweten haren man voirscreven."

In the year 1485 on the 20th day of November died Lady Otte van Egmond, wife of Sir Adriaan van Zwieten, Knight, buried here with Lord Adriaan van Zwieten, her aforementioned husband.

Adriaan van Zwieten (†1486)

"Anno M IIIIc LXXXVI den lesten dach agosto starf heer Adriaen van Zweten ridder Janszn. heer van Opmeer van de Lier ende Zouteveenen etc. Hier begraven bij zijne ouders voor thooghe altaer."

In the year 1486 on the last day of August died Sir Adriaan van Zwieten Jansz., Knight, lord of Opmeer of the Lier and Zouteveen, buried here with his parents in front of the high altar.

Catharina van de Abeele (†1442), wife of Jan van Zwieten

"Anno M IIIIc XLII den XXIII dach Novembri starf joncfrou Katherina van Abeel huysvrouw van Jan van Zweten begraven tot Leyden in Sint Pieters kerck"

In the year 1442 on the 23rd day of November died Lady Catherina van Abeele, wife of Jan van Zwieten, buried in Leiden in St. Peter's Church.

Jan van Zwieten (†1485)

"Anno M IIIc LXXXV den XIIIen dach maert starf Jan van Zweten hier begraven bij Boudewijn van Zweten zijn vader."

In the year 1485 on the 13th day of March died Jan van Zwieten, buried here with Boudewijn van Zwieten, his father.

Catharina van Diemen (†1461), wife of Gijsbrecht van Zwieten

"Anno M IIIc LXI op Sint Anthonisdach starf joncfrou Katherina van Diemen huysvrou van Ghijsbrecht van Zweten begraven in Sint Pieters Kerck tot Leyden."

In the year 1461 on St. Anthony's Feast [January 17] died Lady Catherina van Diemen, wife of Gijsbrecht van Zwieten, buried in St. Peter's Church in Leiden.

Gijsbrecht van Zwieten (†1456)

"Anno M IIIc LVI den XIX dach decembri starf Ghijsbrecht van Zweten Boudewins zoon hier begraven."

In the year 1456 on the 19th day of December died Gijsbrecht van Zwieten, son of Boudewijn, buried here.

Johanna van Leyenburg (†1451), wife of Dirk van Zwieten

"Anno M IIIc LI starf vrou Johanna van Leyenborch huysvrou van heer Dirck van Zweten, ridder begraven tot Haerlem in de Grootte Kerck."

In the year 1451 died Lady Johanna van Leyenburg, wife of Sir Dirk van Zwieten, Knight, buried in the *Grote Kerck* [St. Bavo Church] of Haarlem.

Dirk van Zwieten (†1451)

"Anno M IIIc LI den XXI dach junio starf heer Dirck van Zweten ridder ten Heylighen Graeve oudtste zoon van Boudewijns van Zweten."

In the year 1451 on the 21st day of June died Sir Dirk van Zwieten, knight of the Holy Sepulchre, eldest son of Boudewijn van Zwieten.

Boudewijn van Zwieten (1370/73-1454)

"Hier leyt begraven Boudewijn van Zweten raedt ende tresorier des hooch ghebooren heer hartoge Philips van Bourgongen ende fondator van \dit/ cloester. Starf anno M IIIc LIII den XVIIen dach meije.

Here lies buried Boudewijn van Zwieten, counselor and treasurer of the highborn duke Philip of Burgundy, and founder of this convent. Died in the year 1454 on the 17th day of May.

Ludgard van Nijenrode (1378-1464), wife of Boudewijn van Zwieten

"Hier leyt begraven joncfrou Luytgaert van Nieuro huysvrou van Boudewijns van Zweten. Starf anno M IIIc LXIII op Sint Mathijs dach apostel."

Here lies buried Lady Ludgard van Nijenrode, wife of Boudewijn van Zwieten. Died in the year 1464 on the Feast of St. Matthew apostle [February 24].

Evert van Hoogwoude (†1458), husband of Aleid van Zwieten

"Anno M IIIc LVIII den XX dach maert starf heer Evert ridder heer van Hoochtwoude bastaert van hartoge Willem van Beijeren grave van Hollant begraven inden Hage inde Groote Kerck."

In the year 1458 on the 20th day of March died Sir Evert, Lord of Hoogwoude, Knight, bastard son of duke William of Bavaria count of Holland, buried in the *Grote Kerke* [St. Jacob's Church] in The Hague.

Aleid van Zwieten (1397-1467)

"Anno M IIIc LXVII op Sint Gregorius dach starf vrou Alyt dochter Boudewijns van Zweten heer Evert bastaert van Hollant hoisvrou begraven inden Hage"

In the year 1467 on the Feast of St. Gregory [March 12] died Lady Aleid, daughter of Boudewijn van Zwieten, wife of Evert, bastard of Holland, buried in the Hague.

Catharina van Zwieten (1402/1403-1495), prioress of Mariënpoel

"Anno M IIIc XXV den XV dach septembri starf zuster Katerina dochter Boudewijns van Zweten, hier prioerinne XXXV jaer."

In the year 1425 [= 1495] on the 15th day of September died sister Catharina van Zwieten, daughter of Boudewijn van Zwieten, prioress here [in this convent] for 35 years. (*The year 1425 is probably a result of a faulty restoration. The correct year is 1495.*)

Jan van Poelgeest (†1482), husband of Margriet van Zwieten

"Anno M IIIc XXXII den XX dach octobri staerf Jan van Poelgeest zoon van heer Geryt van Poelgeest ridder begraven in Sint Pieters kerck tot Leyden."

In the year 1432 on the 20th day of October died Jan van Poelgeest, son of Sir Gerrit van Poelgeest, knight, buried in St. Peter's Church in Leiden.

Margriet van Zwieten (†1447)

"Hier leyt begraven joncfrou Mergriet van Zwieten dochter van Boudewijn van Zwieten huysvrou van Jan van Poelgeest. Zij starf anno M IIIc XLVII op Sint Stevens dach."

Here lies buried Margriet van Zwieten, daughter of Boudewijn van Zwieten, wife of Jan van Poelgeest. She died in the year 1447 on St. Stephen's Day [December 26].

Information about the portrayed persons

Boudewijn van Zwieten (1370/73-1454)

Origins

Boudewijn van Zwieten did not belong to the main branch of the Van Zwieten family, but after that branch became extinct in 1413, he bought its main possessions, among which (in 1424) the [manor Zwieten](#), near Zoeterwoude. In 1429 he acquired the Van Zwieten graves in St. Peter's church in Leiden.

Boudewijn became a rich man, whose properties were mainly situated in the bailiwick of Rijnland and the area along the Holland-Utrecht border.

Offices in the county

From 1394 on Boudewijn held important offices for the County of Holland. He was the treasurer of John of Bavaria when John died in 1425. Thereupon Boudewijn came into the service of Duke Philip the Good, Count of Holland (1396-1467). He kept the office of treasurer, and even helped Philip out financially.

In 1428 he became a member of the Council which advised the Count of Holland in legal and administrative matters. In 1447 Boudewijn resigned from this office in favour of his son Dirk. Boudewijn also became a member of the Water Authorities of Rijnland.

Boudewijn's close contacts with Philip the Good and his networking qualities enabled him to gain privileges and help his family and others to positions in the governmental bodies of the county and the town of Leiden.

Donations and foundations for the care of the souls

Boudewijn must have had both religious and political intentions for his most important foundation, the Mariënpoel convent. The first is obvious: Boudewijn made many stipulations concerning the care of the souls of himself, his family and others. Founding this specific convent was also an excellent opportunity for showing his loyalty to Philip the Good.

The convent was destined for nuns from Oudewater. They had had to flee their town due to a political conflict in which Philip the Good was also involved. It is unknown how the contacts between Boudewijn and the nuns came about.

Boudewijn van Zwieten also made donations to St. Peter's church, his parish church in Leiden. He lived in a house in Pieterskerkhof, opposite the church. In 1407 he made a donation for construction activities. He also founded an altar, with two chaplaincies to celebrate Mass (founded in 1421 and 1427). Boudewijn made further arrangements in his last will of 1443.

The detailed stipulations seem to have been typical for him. The choir masters would be in charge of the funds for the chaplaincies. Seven priests were each to read Mass on the altar on a daily basis. They also had to sing the Divine Office in the church. Furthermore Boudewijn tried to guarantee the quality of the music: three choir masters had to be appointed each year. He also founded Masses in the leper chapel outside Leiden, and he gave money for wine to St. Ursula's convent in Warmond, which his daughter Catharina had entered.

Ludgard van Nijenrode (1378-1464)

Boudewijn was married to Ludgard van Nijenrode. She was the daughter of Otto van Nijenrode and Heilwich van Vianen, descendants of important families belonging to the nobility.

Ludgard died on February 24, 1464, at the age of 86, as is recorded in the necrologium. She was buried in the family grave in front of the high altar. A separate arrangement was made in 1457 for the liturgical services for the care of her soul.

Ludgard van Nijenrode is not mentioned in the memorial register.

Dirk (†1451)

Dirk held several offices in the government of Leiden, among which that of bailiff, a position he owed to his father.

We do not know of any donations for the convent, although Dirk's death is commemorated in the register of donations.

Dirk's son, Arend, donated money (6 Rijnse Guldens) to the memory of his father's soul in 1466, fifteen years after his father died. The nature of the religious service for which this donation was meant is unknown. An anniversary can probably be excluded, as this type of service for the soul is not mentioned for Dirk in the necrologium.

Dirk van Zwieten is depicted in the memorial in a suit of armour, carrying the palm branch, the attribute of the pilgrims to Jerusalem. The register of donations gives additional information: Dirk was made a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre. He died in 1451 on the eve of the feast of the 10,000 Martyrs [June 22] on his way home from the Holy Land. His burial place is not mentioned.

Johanna van Leyenburg (†1451)

Johanna van Leyenburg, the wife of Dirk van Zwieten, was a daughter of Arend van Leyenburg (1376-1426) and Heilwig van Arkel-Noordeloos en Zoelen. Arend took several offices in the County of Holland, including membership of the Council of William VI (1411-1417) and John III of Bavaria (1417-1425).

Arend van Leyenburg and Boudewijn van Zwieten must have been colleagues, because Boudewijn also was a councillor for John III of Bavaria.

Though Johanna's portrait does not show the attributes, she seems to have accompanied her husband to the Holy Land. Contrary to her husband she survived the return trip, only to die shortly afterwards, around the feast of the Birth of the Virgin Mary (September 8). Her name and death date are recorded in the donations register immediately after the registration of her husband's death.

Like in Dirk's case, no donations to Mariënpoel made by Johanna van Leyenburg are mentioned. No anniversaries seem to have been celebrated for her soul either. According to the caption in the Van Zwieten memorial painting she was buried in the Grote Kerk (St. Bavo Church) in Haarlem.

Gijsbrecht (†1456)

Gijsbrecht gained the office of bailiff of Leiden (1434-1440) through the contacts of his father. He was also an alderman of this town. After Gijsbrecht was accused of acting without the authorisation of his colleague aldermen, his father succeeded in having Philip the Good change the sentence of the Leiden Court. Instead of having to make a pilgrimage to Einsiedeln (south-east of Zürich) he was allowed to travel to the much closer Halle (near Brussels). Both towns were places of pilgrimage of the Virgin Mary.

When in 1428 Boudewijn's children agreed to the foundation of their father, Gijsbrecht and his brother Jan promised to finance the construction of the convent's church.

This is not mentioned in the donations register, but two other donations are recorded: Gijsbrecht gave an amount of 2 *Rijnse Guldens* a year for pittances for himself and his wife; and an eternal interest of 2 *Ponden*, for food and wine. In 1562 an arrangement was made for memorial services for Gijsbrecht and his wife, then both deceased.

The anniversary for Gijsbrecht was celebrated on December 19. He was buried in Mariënpoel. For hygienic reasons, he could not be buried in the family grave, because he died within two years after his father Boudewijn (†1454). Therefore he was buried in front of the Chapel of the Holy Cross, behind the high altar.

Catharina van Diemen (†1461)

Immediately after Gijsbrecht's donation of money for food and wine, a donation by his wife Catharina van Diemen is mentioned in the donations register of the convent. She donated money (10 *Plakken*) "tot scoon broot" ("for good bread").

In 1562 a separate arrangement was made for memorial services for Catharina and her husband, then both deceased. Catharina van Diemen is not mentioned in the necrologium of Mariënpoel. She was buried in St. Peter's Church in Leiden, according to the text below her portrait in the Van Zwieten memorial.

Catharina van Zwieten (†1495)

It is mentioned in the convent's necrologium that Catharina Van Zwieten was 92 years old when she died in 1495. As a young girl Catharina had entered St. Ursula's convent in Warmond (between 1412 and 1420). This was a convent of the Third Order of St. Francis which participated in the Chapter of Utrecht. At an unknown moment, but before 1460, Catharina left the convent and took her vows in Mariënpoel, where she was a prioress for about 35 years.

Although this is not mentioned in the memorial painting, Catharina has no doubt been buried in her convent, either in the family grave in front of the high altar, or in the grave of the prioresses situated on the (heraldic) left hand side of the high altar.

Jan van Zwieten (†1485)

Jan van Zwieten was the bailiff of Leiden from 1454-1479. When Boudewijn's children agreed to the foundation of their father in 1428, Jan and his brother Gijsbrecht promised to finance the construction of the church. This is not recorded in the convent's register of donations, but it does mention a donation of 50 *Rijnse Guldens*. In return Jan asked for a daily Mass to be read for the duration of a year. Jan was buried in the family grave in Mariënpoel.

He was married twice:

- to Catharina van de Abeele (†1442), and
- to Immesoete van der Marck († before 1510) in 1451.

Immesoete van der Marck was a bastard daughter of Engelbrecht van der Marck and thus a sister of Adolf van der Marck († after 1465), who held important offices in Holland. Immesoete is not mentioned in the convent's donations register, nor in the convent's necrologium.

Catharina van de Abeele is depicted with her husband on the Van Zwieten memorial of 1552. She was the grandmother of Johanna van Zwieten, who commissioned this painting.

Catharina van de Abeele (†1442)

Catharina van de Abeele was the daughter of a burgomaster of Zierikzee.

She bequeathed a fur tabard, which was worth 21 *Beierse guldens*, and our very best chasuble and an alb. The text in the register of donations also mentions: "Item, her daughter died in the year 47 on the Feast of Protus and Hyacinthus [November 9] and she is buried with us, in the grave her mother wished to be buried in, for the mother."

Catharina herself was buried in the church of St. Peter in Leiden, as we can read in the memorial painting. Her anniversary was celebrated on November 23.

Aleid van Zwieten (†1467)

Aleid van Zwieten was married twice:

- to Claas van Diepenburg (†1440) in 1418, and
- to Everhard of Bavaria (†1458) in 1451.

In 1428 Claas van Diepenburg agreed on behalf of his wife to the arrangements Boudewijn van Zwieten had made for the foundation of the convent. Claas held offices in The Hague, including that of bailiff. He also became a member of the Council of Philip the Good, from 1435 until his death in 1440. Therefore Boudewijn van Zwieten and his son-in-law were colleagues.

Though Aleid and both her husbands are not mentioned in the register of donations as benefactors of the convent, an anniversary for Aleid was celebrated on September 9. According to the caption in the memorial painting she died in 1467. The necrologium mentions her age, 70 years. She was buried in "The Hague", undoubtedly in the *Grote Kerk* (St. James' Church), where her second husband Everhard of Bavaria was buried.

Evert is depicted in the memorial painting of the Van Zwieten family.

Evert van Hoogwoude (†1458)

Evert van Hoogwoude (also known as Everhard of Bavaria) was a bastard son of Count William VI (Duke of Bavaria). Aleid was his second wife; he was first married to Jutte van Kijfhoek. He was the bailiff of The Hague and an honorary (unpaid) councillor of Philip the Good.

Evert is not mentioned in the register of donations, nor in the necrologium. He was buried in the *Grote Kerk* (Church of St. James) in The Hague.

Margriet van Zwieten (†1447)

Margriet van Zwieten is commemorated in the register of donations. She died "in the year 47 on the feast of St. Stephen on the day after Christmas [26 December], in the evening". Her anniversary was celebrated on the same day.

She was buried in Mariënpoel, possibly the first to be buried in the family grave in front of the high altar.

Jan van Poelgeest (†1457)

Jan van Poelgeest was the son of Gerard van Poelgeest and Claasje van Naaldwijk. He was the bailiff of Texel (1440). In Leiden he was a burgomaster and later became the bailiff, from 1447-1453. He was also a member of the Rijnland Water Authorities from 1447-1453, because his father-in-law Boudewijn van Zwieten resigned from this position on Jan's behalf. Jan owned Klein-Poelgeest, was lord of Hoogmade and lord of Koudekerke.

In 1428 Jan van Poelgeest agreed on behalf of his wife Margriet to the arrangements Boudewijn van Zwieten had made for the foundation of Mariënpoel. He is not mentioned in the register of donations, nor in the necrologium.

He was buried in the church of St. Peter in Leiden.

Adriaan van Zwieten (†1486)

Adriaan held offices in the government of the town of Leiden as a member of the Council of Forty (*veertigraad*), as a burgomaster and as the bailiff. He was also the bailiff of Rijnland from 1470-1480. He was an important benefactor of the Mariënpoel convent. According to the sacristan's book (*Coster boeck*) he founded the altar that was dedicated to St. Andrew and other saints in 1457.

This foundation is not mentioned in the foundations register, but it does mention a donation concerning an altarpiece, probably for St. Andrew's altar. Adriaan donated an amount of 38 *Rijnse Guldens* to have the altarpiece finished, for a tabernacle, and for a lectern. He also founded a weekly Mass for the souls of himself and both his wives, for which he arranged to pay 1 *Pond Groot* a year.

When his father Jan died, Adriaan founded in the church of St. Peter in Leiden a memorial service for his parents, his parents-in-law, himself and both his wives, to be celebrated on the high altar. He made extensive stipulations concerning the Mass to be sung and the visit to the grave. It is unclear whose grave this was, because Adriaan himself was buried in the family grave in Mariënpoel. His anniversary is recorded in the necrologium as August 31.

Adriaan van Zwieten was married twice:

- to Machteld van Hodenpijl (†1467), and
- to Otte van Egmond (†1485).

Machteld van Hodenpijl was the daughter of Jan, lord of Hodenpijl, of half of De Lier and of Zouteveen. Her mother was Johanna van Berlaimont. The family belonged traditionally to the Hook party throughout the second half of the 14th century and the first quarter of the 15th century.

No anniversary is recorded for Machteld in the necrologium. Her date of death (1467 on the feast of St. Vitalis [April 28]), is mentioned in the register of donations. Her "best tabard" was a bequest by her husband to the convent.

Willem van Reimerswaal, husband of Catharina Adriaansdr. (daughter from Adriaan's marriage to Machteld van Hodenpijl) donated the statue of St. Paul around 1497.

Otte van Egmond (†1485)

Otte van Egmond, Lady of Zegwaard, was the daughter of Willem van Egmond van Zevenhuizen and Johanna van Heemskerck. She is depicted in the 1552 memorial painting, as she was the mother of Johanna, who commissioned the painting.

In 1493 her son Jan van Zwieten inherited the fiefs of the Van Egmond family, because the male branch of this family became extinct.

Johanna van Zwieten (†1556)

Johanna, daughter of Adriaan van Zwieten and Otte van Egmond, was the last living member of her branch of the family. She had a brother, Jan (†1510), and a sister, Josina († before 1526). Josina was married to Willem van den Coulster (who took the name of Alkemade; †1553). Jan was married to Philippa van Heemstede (†1524). Their son Jan died without progeny in 1526, 16 or 17 years old. Johanna inherited his house on the Rapenburg in Leiden; she probably lived there until her death in 1554.

Johanna's sister, her in-laws and her nephew are not mentioned in the register of donations and the necrologium. They are not depicted in the memorial painting Johanna donated to Mariënpoel either.

The date of death of Johanna is not recorded in the memorial painting, but it is mentioned in the memorial register: "In the year of Our Lord 1554 on September 20 died the honourable (*eerwaerdige*) Lady Johanna van Zwieten, daughter of Lord Adriaan van Zwieten, Lady of Opmeer, and she gave us 60 *Rijnse Guldens* as a legacy. May she rest in peace. Amen."

Johanna also donated seats at the pillars near the altar of St. Bartholomew in the St. Peter's church in Leiden to replace the large square women's chairs her grandfather Jan had donated. She legated her possessions to her deceased sister's daughter, Agatha van Alkemade.

Jan van Zwieten (†1510)

Jan van Zwieten was the last male descendant from his branch of the Van Zwieten family. He was appointed as a member of the Water Authorities of Rijnland in 1502. From then to 1509 he was the bailiff of Leiden. Furthermore he became the sheriff of Gorkum in 1502 and in the land of Arkel in 1508.

He married Philippa van Heemstede in 1501, with whom he had one son, Jan (†1526). The family lived at the Rapenburg in Leiden.

Johanna's brother Jan is probably mentioned in the necrologium, on August 14. This means that his anniversary was to be celebrated one day after the day he died. He is not mentioned in the register of donations.

Heraldry

Strict rules for heraldry

Heraldry is meant to recognise persons, (membership of) families and, in some cases, memberships of other communities as well (see [Commanders of the Teutonic Order](#)) hence the variety in colours and symbols.

Heraldry is created according to strict rules. It was important both on the battlefield and on objects such as memorial pieces and monuments to be able to recognise the person behind the shield. This allowed a proper commemorative prayer to be said for the soul of this very person.

In the Van Zwieten painting the men and the unmarried women are accompanied by their family arms. The married women have the so-called [per pale arms](#): the field is divided in two parts, one for the husband's and one for the wife's family arms.

On top of the men's coats of arms in the painting we find several symbols. Like the suit of armor, they show the men's noble or knightly origin. The main symbols are the helmet and its [mantling](#) (looking like plant leaves) in the colours of the coat of arms. For the Van Zwietens these colours are red and silver. On top of the helmet is the [crest](#), a dog for the Van Zwieten family.

Heraldic courtesy to pay tribute

In "per pale" arms the part of the man is placed on the heraldic *right* hand side, like in those of Ludgard and her daughters, Aleid and Margriet. In some cases, however, the rules of heraldic courtesy prevail, as we can also see in the Van Zwieten memorial.

The two heraldic elements in the arms of the married women to St. Mary's right are painted in reverse, which places the Van Zwieten coats of arms – of the men – closest to the religious image. Like the portraits, the men's coats of arms have precedence over the coat of arms of the women in order to pay proper tribute to the Virgin and Child.

The men of the Van Zwieten family (all to Mary's right) also pay tribute by the placement of the helmet and the crest, a silver dog. They are placed three quarters to the left. This is contrary to the correct placement on the right hand side of the painting. The direction did not need to be reversed for the silver bird of Jan van Poelgeest and the crown of peacock feathers of Evert van Hoogwoud.

The eight quarters of Jan van Zwieten

Johanna van Zwieten wanted her brother Jan to have pride of place in the painting because he was the last male descendant of her branch of the Van Zwieten family.

She did this by breaking the usual pattern for the placement of males and females: she had his portrait placed on the very left hand side of the painting, behind her own portrait.

To emphasize his special position, she had Jan's coat of arms surrounded by his eight quarters. They show his ancestors from both sides extending back to his great great grandparents.

The coats of arms: A tribute to St. Mary and her Son

In most medieval memorials both the placement of the portraits and the coats of arms pay tribute to the saints or the holy history represented in the main image. This painting shows two standard gender-related patterns: though Boudewijn and Ludgard both kneel closest to the Virgin and her Son, Ludgard is on the modest left hand side. Their descendants and in-laws kneel behind them, with the wives kneeling behind their husbands. Thus the placement of the men and women also is an expression of the *gendered hierarchy* of the Middle Ages. The coats of arms show the same hierarchy, again honouring the Virgin and Child by granting men precedence.

Coats of arms Boudewijn and Ludgard

Boudewijn van Zwieten: In red three silver violins, 2 and 1, accompanied by an escutcheon with the coat of arms of his mother Trude: in gold a red anchor cross.

Ludgard van Nijenrode: Per pale. In 1 the coat of arms of her husband Boudewijn; in 2: in gold a red fess, the coat of arms of her own Van Nijenrode family. -- More: Click on *Heraldry*.

Coat of arms of Otte van Egmond and Adriaan van Zwieten

Otte van Egmond and her husband Adriaan van Zwieten are kneeling on the right hand side of St. Mary. To pay tribute to the Mother of God, in the per pale arms of Otte the two parts are reversed and in the coat of arms of Adriaan the elements on top of the shield are turned to the heraldic left. Similar changes have been made for the heraldry of the other couples on the right of Mary. For the persons kneeling at her other side this heraldic courtesy was not needed, as the arms and the elements on top are turned to the correct side.

Coat of arms of Johanna

In the Van Zwieten painting the men and the unmarried women are accompanied by their family arms. The married women have the so-called 'per pale' arms: the field is divided in two parts, one for the husband's and one for the wife's family arms.

Coat of arms of Catharina

In the Van Zwieten painting the men and the unmarried women are accompanied by their family arms. The married women have the so-called 'per pale' arms: the field is divided in two parts, one for the husband's and one for the wife's family arms.

Coat of arms Jan

Johanna van Zwieten wanted her brother Jan to have pride of place in the painting because he was the last male descendant of her branch of the Van Zwieten family. She did this by breaking the usual pattern for the placement of males and females: she had his portrait placed on the very left hand side of the painting, behind her own portrait. To emphasize his special position, she had Jan's coat of arms surrounded by his eight quarters. They show his ancestors from both sides extending back to his great great grandparents.

Coat of arms of Jan van Poelgeest and Margriet van Zwieten

Heraldry is meant to recognise persons and membership of families, hence the variety in colours and symbols. Jan van Poelgeest's family arms lack for instance the small escutcheon typical for Boudewijn and his descendants.

Prayer

The administration of memoria

As today, the principle of "I give so that you may give" was the agent for social bonding and power in the Middle Ages, in society in general and in memoria. Many religious services in Mariënpoel involved the care for the souls of its benefactors. These were the so-called counter-gifts (return-gifts). An administration was set up to be able to perform the duties properly. For Mariënpoel the donations register and the necrologium offer a broad overview of the gifts and return-gifts.

The necrologium reminded the nuns and priests of the memorial services to be performed at fixed moments of the year. It consists of a calendar showing when and for whom the *anniversaries* were to be performed. Apart from the nuns and priests of the convent, benefactors are mentioned, including - twice - Duke Philip the Good, who gave the convent important privileges. The anniversary usually involved a prayer service on the eve of the anniversary (vigil), and a Mass and visit to the grave on the day itself. The grave was usually covered with a pal (*pallia*), a costly decorated piece of textile, on which candles were placed.

Left: Page from the necrologium with the benefactors Gerard Butenwech and his wife Geertruid, Jan van Zwieten, the rector and socius Jacob Martensz., the nuns Elisabeth Johannesdr. Van Poelgeest and Agnes Dirksdr. Scut and the lay sister Catharina Johannesdr.

The donations register of Mariënpoel is included in the "memorial book" of over 25 pages. It mentions money and interests, manuscripts and books, household goods, liturgical equipment, works of art, land and food.

It was started in the first half of the 15th century and kept up to date until 1570 by many different hands. The information is rather diverse, with elaborate or short descriptions of the gifts, with or without an elaborate identification of the donor, with or without her or his death date.

Return services are also recorded in a number of cases. Prayer was asked the most. Other return-gifts were: Masses and prayers for a limited period immediately after death, and services at fixed moments of the year, either for eternity or for a shorter period. It is unclear what happened in cases where counter-gifts were not mentioned, which were the great majority.

Left: Two pages in the register of donations mentioning: for Jan van Zwieten a daily Mass for the duration of a year; for Adriaan van Zwieten an eternal weekly Mass for himself and both his wives; and for the Lady of Sanctus prayers for her husband.

Special memorial services

The sacristan's book (*Coster boeck*) mentions an anniversary "after Whitsuntide" for all brothers and sisters belonging to the Chapter of Sion, during which four candles were to be burnt on the grave of the rectors (*highlighted*).

In 1558 the convent made an arrangement with Wouter Jacobsz., prior of the Canons Regular convent of Stein. The nuns granted him an eternal anniversary in return for which he promised to read a Requiem Mass for every nun of Mariënpoel who would die during his lifetime. This is recorded in the register of donations.

For those who could not afford to pay for specific services there was All Souls' Day, the feast celebrated on November 2, on which the souls of all who had died were commemorated.

Returngifts for Boudewijn and his family and friends

The returngifts for Boudewijn and his family and friends can be found in the necrologium, the memorial book and the sacristan's book, but the foundation charter gives the best overview.

Each time the nuns entered and left the choir of the church they had to say a prayer at the family grave. If the convent was true to its promise, this stipulation may have been very beneficial for the family, because the nuns had to enter the choir many times a day for singing the Divine Office.

Boudewijn also ordered a requiem mass with a visit to the family grave for every week and on the days preceding the feasts of St. Mary. A Mass for the Virgin Mary was to be celebrated every Saturday, after which the nuns were to say five Hail Mary's for their founder. And each year the convent was to celebrate an anniversary for Boudewijn, his family and friends on the day he died on May 17, 1454.

Benefactors: a community of family and professional relations

Among the names of the benefactors are family of the nuns and other benefactors, and professional relations of benefactors, such as:

1. priests in churches in Leiden, like Jacob Pietersz. Asselijns (†1532), and elsewhere;
2. members of the nobility such as Hendrik van Wassenaar (†1447) who had sold Podikenpoel (Toad Marsh) to Boudewijn van Zwieten and who, like Boudewijn, was an official in the County of Holland; members of the Van Poelgeest family, the Van Heerman family, and
3. Jacob Pietersz., "our neighbour" (†1569).

Frank van de Boekhorst and Catharina van Bakenesse and their descendants were important benefactors in the second half of the fifteenth century. Their offspring was related to the Van Zwieten descendants through marriage, and the couple had two daughters in the convent at the time Catharina van Zwieten was prioress. Among the many donations was the foundation of the Barbara altar in 1457. In front of the altar was the family grave.

Politics

Boudewijn van Zwieten, politician and religious man

Boudewijn van Zwieten was born between 1370 and 1373. From 1394 on he held offices in the County of Holland. He became acting treasurer in 1420, and later treasurer under [John of Bavaria](#) (John of Bavaria, 1424-1425). After John's death Boudewijn was appointed treasurer of [Philip the Good](#) (Philip of Burgundy).

As an official of the County Boudewijn became indirectly involved in the war about the sovereignty over Holland and Zeeland, in which Jacqueline of Bavaria would be opposed to John of Bavaria and Philip the Good (1525-1533). An agreement was reached in 1428 (*Zoen van Delft*) and Boudewijn was appointed in the Council of Nine that ruled the two counties on behalf of Jacqueline of Bavaria and Philip the Good. Later Boudewijn became counsellor (*raadshere*) of Philip from 1432 to 1447.

It turned out that Boudewijn had chosen wisely in his career move: his employer Philip the Good would be victorious in every respect (*for background information click the buttons 2 and 3 below*). When it comes to the care for the souls, however, Boudewijn refused to choose: in the [foundation charter](#) (1431) of the Mariënpool convent he requests the nuns to pray for all of the sovereigns he served, mentioning each one by name.

The contested rule of power of Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut

When William VI of Bavaria died in 1417, his only child Jacqueline (1401-1436) inherited Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut, fiefs of the German Empire ([Holy Roman Empire](#)). Sigismund, the later emperor, however, only acknowledged succession along the male line for these counties. He considered John of Bavaria, William's brother, the rightful candidate.

Being a woman Jacqueline, widow to John of Touraine in 1417, needed a legal guardian. Therefore she and her supporters looked for a suitable husband who would help her gain the rule of power in her counties. A marriage in 1418 to John IV of Brabant (1403-1427), her nephew, was followed by a marriage to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (1390-1447) in 1422.

These marriages were not successful, as the husbands would prove to be disloyal or powerless, and they resulted in divorce and nullification. In 1432 (and again in 1434) Jacqueline married Frank of Borselen (1395-1470/71), but by that time Philip the Good had assumed power over Jacqueline's heritage. Jacqueline died in 1436.

War between Jacqueline and Philip

In February 1419, Jacqueline's second husband, John of Brabant, pawned Holland and Zeeland to her uncle, John of Bavaria, resulting in another episode of the Hook and Cod Wars (*Hoekse en Kabeljauwse Twisten*), a series of conflicts in Holland in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Hooks took Jacqueline's side, whereas the Cods opted for her uncle.

When in 1425 John of Bavaria died, the Cods chose John of Brabant as his successor. Having divorced Jacqueline he appointed his relative Philip of Burgundy as his heir. Now open war broke out, in which Oudewater, Gouda and Schoonhoven functioned as the strongholds from which Jacqueline and her Hook party fought Philip and the Cods. In 1428 the opposing parties reached an agreement (*Zoen van Delft*). Philip was appointed regent (ruwaard) and heir; Jacqueline was granted the title of countess, provided that she would not remarry without Philip's consent. In 1432, however, she secretly married Frank van Borselen, which resulted in Philip assuming definite power.

For Boudewijn van Zwieten the year 1425 had been crucial. He succeeded in transferring his allegiance from John of Bavaria to Philip the Good. This turned out to be the right choice, but it indirectly made him a party in the conflict that arose in the bishopric of Utrecht.

The Utrecht Schism

The bishop of Utrecht was not only a prelate of the Church, but also a secular prince. His secular territory, known as *Het Sticht*, consisted of the *Nedersticht* (the present province of Utrecht) and the *Oversticht* (Overijssel, Drenthe and the city of Groningen). His ecclesiastical authority extended more widely and also comprised the county of Holland, and large parts of Zeeland and Frisia ([bishopric of Utrecht](#)).

When bishop Frederik van Blankenheim died in 1423, the Utrecht chapters chose Rudolf van Diepholt as his successor. With the support of Philip the Good, however, the Pope made Zweder van Kuilenburg bishop. This resulted in a schism, in which secular and ecclesiastical viewpoints were intertwined.

In 1427, the Hook party of Jacqueline of Bavaria and the three towns of Oudewater, Gouda and Schoonhoven made a pact with Rudolf van Diepholt, who held the actual power in Utrecht at that time.

As the appointed bishop, Zweder, could exercise his right to impose excommunication and interdict and he placed a number of towns under an interdict, including Oudewater, Gouda and Schoonhoven.

People who were excommunicated were excluded from the sacraments, and the places under interdict were forced to discontinue all religious services, including the burial of the dead in hallowed ground. This was a severe penalty, because the Church teaches that one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without having received the last sacrament, which served to relieve the dying of their sins.

This situation was very problematic for the convents of the Modern Devotion. They were not placed under interdict, as they sided with the Pope and the bishop, but contacts with those who were, was forbidden. This resulted in social isolation and loss of income. This situation may have forced the nuns of St Ursula to leave their home town of Oudewater.

Loyalty to Philip the Good: the right choice

The combination of these conflicts offered Boudewijn van Zwieten an excellent opportunity to show his loyalty to Philip. Becoming an official under Philip the Good proved to have been the right political choice for Boudewijn van Zwieten, because in the end the Duke was victorious in every respect. Philip and Rudolf van Diepholt made peace in 1430. Rudolf gradually became accepted as the rightful bishop in all parts of his territory.

Boudewijn became an ever richer and more powerful man, who succeeded in helping family and friends to gain important offices in the county and in the town of Leiden. In many cases professional relations also became blood relations through marriage. Daughters of family, friends and colleagues entered the convent he had founded.

Explore the family network and the [real estate and landed property](#) of Boudewijn van Zwieten.

Power and Influence of Boudewijn van Zwieten

Boudewijn gained most of his wealth as a modern official in service of the count of Holland. However, he invested his money more traditionally, in real estate and in land property.

Explore the ways, in which he sought to increase his power and influence: *move the cursor over the pedigree or over the symbols on the map*. Note: the map shows only his major assets.

Boudewijn van Zwieten

After having held some lower offices, Boudewijn was given the post of treasurer of John of Bavaria. He kept this position under Philip of Burgundy and became a counsilar, member of the advisory board of the count. He obtained also a position in the polderboard of Rijnland.

Ludgard van Nijenrode

Ludgard was the daughter of the wealthy nobleman, Otto van Nijenrode and Heilwich van Vianen. In 1398 Otto had served the count of Holland with with a small force of armed men against the Frisians. The Nijenrodes belonged to the most distinguished families in the region.

Dirk

Dirk held several offices in the government of Leiden, among which that of bailiff, a position he thanked to his father. Through Boudewijn's resignation he got a position in the county council of Holland.

Johanna van Leyenburg

Johanna was the daughter of Arend van Leyenburg and Heilwig van Arkel-Noordeloos en Zoelen. Arend and Boudewijn van Zwieten were colleagues because they were both members of the county council of Holland under John of Bavaria.

Gijsbrecht

Gijsbrecht became bailiff in Leiden through his father. He also held the office of alderman in this town.

Jan

Jan was bailiff in Leiden.

Catherina van de Abeele

Catherina was a daughter of the burgomaster of Zierikzee.

Everhard van Hoogwoude

Everhard was a bastard son of William IV of Bavaria, count of Holland (hence his alternative name Everhard van Beieren). He got a position of bailiff in The Hague and became honorary (unpaid) member of the county council.

Catherina

First she was a nun in the convent in Warmond, but before 1460 she entered the convent of Mariënpoel and was prioress for circa 35 years.

Jan van Poelgeest

Jan was bailiff of Texel, and mayor and bailiff in Leiden. After resignation of Boudewijn van Zwieten he obtained the position of his father-in-law in the polderboard of Rijnland. In addition he was lord of Hoogmade and he held the fiefdom of Koudekerke.

Timeline

Convent

1428 A new convent for nuns from Oudewater

The nuns of St. Ursula moved away from Oudewater in 1428. This was the result of a conflict for the rule of power between Jacqueline of Bavaria and Philip of Burgundy, and a conflict between Zweder van Kuilenburg and Rudolf van Diepholt about the seat of the bishopric of Utrecht.

The Pope had assigned the bishopric to Zweder. Philip the Good sided with the Pope, as did the convents of the Modern Devotion, to which the Ursula convent belonged. Therefore, when Jacoba of Bavaria's faction, including the town of Oudewater, chose the side of Rudolf van Diepholt in 1427, the nuns were forced to leave.

Boudewijn van Zwieten, a high official working for Philip the Good, came to the rescue.

Left: The chronicle of the Oudewater convent is mainly a description of the convent's grounds at the Kapellestraat where, from 1412 on, the nuns had extended their property. It had a chapel, a house with rooms for the priest, a refectory, a hospital and a kitchen, and a house for baking, brewing, weaving and making peat. The nuns housed pigs, and had a fishpond and a well.

Foundation of the new convent

The donations register of Mariënpoel begins with an announcement of the nuns' arrival at Leiden: "In the year of Our Lord 1428 on March 20, our sisters arrived in Leiden. And these are the gifts we received since that time." "Int iaer ons heren m cccc ende xxviii opten xxsten dach in die maert doe quamen onse susteren eerst te Leyden. Ende dit sijn die aelmissen ende weldaden die wi sint ontfanghen hebben."

This announcement is followed by a list of donations of 25 pages, starting with the gifts of Boudewijn van Zwieten: the homestead and the surrounding land on which the nuns lived, a yearly interest in perpetuity of 200 Borgoense Schilden, 400 Rijnse Guldens for the church, and 200 Postulaatsguldens.

Soon after the nuns had arrived, others donated as well: Boudewijn's children; other family members such as Bruninck Spruijt, the brother of Boudewijn's wife Ludgard, who participated in the Leiden government; colleague officials and business relations such as Hendrik van Wassenaar, who had sold Paddenpoel to Boudewijn, and his wife.

Left: The memorial book (memorieboec) of Mariënpoel consists of a chronicle and a donations register of the St. Ursula convent in Oudewater, and a register of donations of Mariënpoel.

1428 Agreement with Boudewijn's children

A costly affair

Boudewijn van Zwieten was obliged to ask his children for permission, as they would lose a considerable part of the family capital. They did not object and signed a document on October 1, 1428, in which they agreed to the stipulations in their father's will. As women needed a guardian to act on their behalf, the sons-in-law signed for the daughters.

Promises kept and promises broken

In the 1428 agreement Boudewijn's children also promised to continue supporting the convent. Jan and Gijsbrecht would pay for the church to be built. This is not recorded in the register of donations. It does, however, mention donations of money and interests by Gijsbrecht, his wife and two of their children.

Important benefactors were especially Jan van Zwieten and his descendants, including Johanna van Zwieten. They donated an altar, Holy Masses and decorations for the church. None of the married daughters and none of the sons-in-law are mentioned as benefactors. Neither is Dirk, possibly due to his untimely death in 1451. His son Arend legated a sum of 5 Rijnse Guldens for his father's soul in 1466.

Questions

Although no donations are recorded, the names and death dates of daughter Margriet and of Dirk and his wife Johanna van Leyenburg are mentioned in the register of donations. Aleid is not mentioned, although she donated indirectly, by name of her first husband Claas van Diepenburg (†1440), by agreeing to her father's use of the family capital.

1428 Permission from the parish priest of Oegstgeest

As Mariënpoel resorted under the parish of Oegstgeest, the parish priest also was involved in the foundation. In a charter of November 4, 1428, he granted privileges concerning the gifts and alms received by the convent, and the consecration of the church, altars and cemetery. The rector was allowed to perform the last rites and burials.

The exiled bishop, Zweder van Kuilenburg, confirmed both the foundation and the consent of the parish priest by charter of March 3, 1429.

Conflicts about the payments

An arrangement was made for financial compensation of the parish priest, as he would lose part of his income. Over the years this gave rise to conflicts. Problems about the payments to the sacristan of the parish church were solved in 1447. It was decided that the convent was not obliged to pay him for loss of income. The former agreements were clarified and confirmed shortly afterwards, in 1450:

- The parish priest would receive the outstanding payments and the convent would pay its due from now on.
- In return the convent could keep all gifts and alms.
- Each year at Easter the convent was to ask permission to have its priests perform the last rites for the nuns.
- This request had to be made for the guests of the convent should the occasion arise.

1431 The convent's foundation charter

A convent in Podikenpoel

"[...] so hebbe ic [...] gheordineert een cloester van nonnen regularissen, die nu ter tijt wonachtich sijn ende namaels wonen sullen ten ewighen daghen opter hofstede diemen te heten plach Podikenpoel ende voirtan sal heten Sunte Marienpoel of Onser Liever Vrouwenpoel..."

"[...] thus I [...] founded a convent of Canonesses Regular, who are now living and will live to eternity on the homestead that used to be called Podikenpoel (Toad Marsh), and that from now on shall be called St. Mary's Marsh (Mariënpoel) or Our Lady's Marsh."

Boudewijn had many stipulations recorded, concerning the admittance of new sisters, the money the convent could use for their livelihood and the upkeep of the buildings, the daily routine, the care for the souls of himself, his family and friends, and the inspection by the visitators.

Seals for remembering and securing

The charter shows (from left to right) the seals of Boudewijn van Zwieten, the two visitators of the chapter of Sion, and that of the convent itself. Boudewijn's coat of arms is included in the convent's seal below the image of Mary; again the founder is putting his mark on the convent.

1445 Confirmation by Philip the Good and successors

In 1429 Duke Philip the Good had already confirmed the arrangements Boudewijn van Zwieten had made with his children. Sixteen years later he validated the stipulations of the convent's foundation and granted the nuns several privileges:

- The convent may have two or three stewards to care for its possessions.
- Nobody, not even the Count, may force the convent to accept a person into the convent against its wishes.
- The nuns may ask civilian courts to remove persons guilty of disobedience from the convent and punish them.

These were important privileges. As Mariënpoel was a contemplative community whose contact with the outside world had to be limited to a bare minimum, the nuns needed trustworthy outsiders to take care of their immovable property.

The second privilege limited the power of Philip and his successors over the convent, as they were not allowed to force the admittance of any women. The third allowed the nuns to ask for help from the outside world should a conflict arise within the convent itself.

The stipulations and privileges were - with variations - confirmed by Philip the Fair in 1505 and by Charles V in 1516.

1450 Boudewijn settles accounts with convent

Part of the payments by Boudewijn van Zwieten to Mariënpoel were made as late as 1450, when he finalised the arrangements with the convent. The agreement concludes with:

"Ende hiermede is die fundacie des cloesters voorscreven ende ander sculden vol ende al betaelt ende alle ding doet die twsschen den cloester voorscreven ende my Boudijn van Zwieten voornoemt gestaen hebben tot deser tijt toe."

"And thus the foundation of the afore-mentioned convent and the other debts are completely paid, and all is finished that was between the abovementioned convent and me, the afore-mentioned Boudewijn van Zwieten, until today."

The text ends with the notification that the agreement was made by Boudewijn van Zwieten on the one hand, and by rector Boudewijn and his socius Peter, Canons Regular from the convent of Stein on the other hand, and in the presence of Gijsbrecht and Jan, sons of Boudewijn.

This is followed by the date of the agreement, March 31, 1450, and the notice that Boudewijn had secured the agreement by his seal and signature.

1454 Death of Boudewijn van Zwieten (May 17)

Stipulations in the foundation charter

Boudewijn van Zwieten stipulated in the foundation charter that he was to be buried in Mariënpoel:

"Voirtmeer, want ic mij bekenne te wesen een sterflic mensche ende mij niet sekerre en is dan die doot, so hebbe ic dair om vercoren ende verkiese mijn sepulture mijns lichaems inden voirs. cloester van Sinte Marienpoel, op dat die voirs. nonnen te meer oirsaecs hebben te bidden voir mijn ziel [...]"

"Furthermore, I am aware of being mortal and that nothing is more certain than death. Therefore I have chosen to have my body laid to rest in the convent of St. Mariënpoel, so that the nuns have all the more reason to pray for my soul [...]"

Anniversary of Boudewijn

As he stipulated in the foundation charter, Boudewijn's anniversary is written in the calendar of the necrologium on May 17, the day of his death. We also learn his age from this text:

"Anniversarius solempnis venerabilis Baldewini de Zwieten patris ac fundatoris huius monasterii. Obiit Anno Domini 1454 Etatis sue lxxxiii"

"Solemn anniversary of the respected Boudewijn van Zwieten, father and founder of the convent. He died in the year 1454, at the age of 83"

1459 Catharina van Zwieten prioress

Nun in Warmond

As a young girl Catharina, the daughter of Boudewijn and Ludgard, had entered the convent of St. Ursula in Warmond (between 1412 and 1420). This was a convent of the Third Order of St. Francis which participated in the Chapter of Utrecht. At an unknown moment she left this convent and made her profession in Mariënpoel.

Prioress for 36 years

As is mentioned in the convent's anniversarium Catherina was 92 years old when she died in 1495 and she was prioress for 36 years.

1495 Death Catharina van Zwieten

Nun in Warmond

Catharina, the daughter of Boudewijn and Ludgard, had entered the St. Ursula convent in Warmond as a young girl (between 1412 and 1420). This was a convent of the Third Order of St. Francis which participated in the Chapter of Utrecht, an umbrella organisation of convents. At an unknown moment, but before 1460, she left Warmond and took her vows in Mariënpoel.

Prioress for 36 years

The convent's necrologium mentions that Catharina was 92 years old when she died in 1495 and that she was the prioress for 36 years. Her memorial service was celebrated on September 15.

"Anniversarius venerabilis matris nostre Katherine Boldewini de Zwieten fundatoris nostri qui laudibilter nobis prefuit in officio priorisse xxxvi annis obiit anno domini 1495 etatis sue 92".

"Anniversary of our respected mother Catharina, daughter of Boudewijn van Zwieten our founder, who honourably guided us as prioress for 36 years. She died in the year of the Lord 1495 aged 92."

1522 Gerritje van Rietwijk, prioress and benefactress

Gerritje Ijsbrandsdr. van Rietwijk is already mentioned in a document of 1522. In 1560 she is mentioned as the prioress, which she remained until her death on June 25, 1572. This was one day before the Beggars (Geuzen), who rebelled against Philip II, burst into Leiden (see also: Dissolution of the convent).

Gerritje's father, Ijsbrand Willemsz. van Rietwijk, held several political offices, including that of bailiff of Egmond. Her mother, Margaretha Florisdr., belonged to the noble Van Alkemade family.

It is very likely that Gerritje herself had a hand in making her family donate largely to the convent. She wrote most of these gifts on a paper bifolium that was included in the parchment register of donations. Writing in the first person singular, she mentions how the benefactors are related to her.

Right: Donations by Gerritje Ijsbrandsdr. van Rietwijk, the last prioress of the convent, and her family.

Gerritje van Rietwijk: gifts and returngifts

The donations register mentions gifts by Gerritje and her family over a period of 35 years, between 1535 and 1570. The donations consisted of money to be used for a choir stall for example, for an annual meal for the nuns and for buying a garden.

The donations by Gerritje herself surpassed those of her family. She gave more than 600 Rijnse Guldens; her last donation was made in 1570.

In some cases the returngift is mentioned, i.e., what the nuns were required to give to their benefactors in return. These gifts all concerned the care for the souls of Gerritje and her family. For the donation of 1554 the nuns had to give five memorial services in return, in February, March, July, August and September.

Another example is the text of the first donation in 1557, which mentions "for this [gift] anniversaries [another type of memorial services] should be celebrated for my father, mother, brother, sisters and all my friends".

Right: Gerritje van Rietwijk gave her last gift to the convent in 1570. See also 1593 Survey of confiscated possession.

1593 Survey of confiscated possessions

After the confiscation of the religious institutions the States of Holland and West-Friesland wished to secure the confiscated landed property. Thus Jacob van Banchem, sworn land surveyor of Holland, was one of the persons who were commissioned to draw up a series of plans. He started work in January 1592 and finished on April 15, 1593.

The text on the title page specifies on the contents of the manuscript: it contains plans of the confiscated land of several convents, among which Mariënpoel, to the south and west of Leiden.

This map shows four warmoes thuijnen, vegetable gardens, in Leiderdorp outside Leiden. They belonged to the Mariënpoel convent. The measurements of each garden are specified in the drawing, as are the owners of the neighbouring properties.

One of these gardens had probably been bought in 1570 with money of Gerritje van Rietwijk (†1572), the prioress at the time. In the memorial register Gerritje mentions a garden situated at the Minderbroederspad in the foreland outside the dikes. This could be the garden marked A or B on the map. Gerritje speaks of "the last road", which could mean the road furthest from the Minderbroederspad.

1566 Iconoclasm prevented

It is recorded by a priest of the Church of St. Pancras in Leiden in 1566 that an outbreak of iconoclasm in the convent was prevented. The priest wrote that a distinguished gentleman gave money by the handful to the vandals, who thereupon returned to town.

It is traditionally assumed that this gentleman was Adriaan van Zwieten (1532-1584) who was in Leiden at that moment. Adriaan Cornelisz. van Zwieten was a descendant of Boudewijn and Ludgard. He participated in the Revolt against King Philip II and was a commanding officer in the army of William of Orange.

1572 Dissolution of the convent

Dissolution of the convents

The town of Leiden joined William of Orange in the Revolt against King Philip II in 1572. This also meant that the reformed religion became the public religion. The convents and churches were dissolved. The nuns were allowed to stay together as a community, though, and lived in Leiden. They received a maintenance allowance that was paid out of their possessions, which had been confiscated by the States of Holland, Zeeland and West-Friesland.

Confiscation of the possessions

In 1583 the remaining nuns handed over (part of) their archives to the town of Leiden, whereupon the town's secretary Jan van Hout made a first description of the documents. These were very important documents for the town, because they would give the authorities an overview of the landed property, houses, interests, etc. they had confiscated.

An important archival source must have been the register with the convent's charters that was begun in 1558 by Claas Cornelisz., and was finished by Adriaan Adriaansz., both priests in the convent. This is mentioned in the register of donations, ending with the prayer "Requiescant in pace", "May they rest in peace" for the authors. The archives of the convent are currently kept in the Regionaal Archief Leiden (RAL).

Some of the works of art came into the possession of the town of Leiden. The painter and poet Karel van Mander wrote in his *Schilder boeck* (Painter book) of 1604 that he had seen two triptychs in the town hall which had belonged to the convent.

The Van Zwieten memorial is mentioned in the seventeenth century by the Utrecht historiographer Arnoldus Buchelius (1565-1641). He saw it at the house of Adriaan van Zwieten, a descendant of Gijsbrecht, the son of Boudewijn van Zwieten (see *Inscriptiones* by Buchelius, p. 93 and 152-153). The painting was bequeathed to the city of Leiden by a descendant of the Van Zwietens in 1918.

1572 Death of Gerritje IJsbrandsdr van Rietwijk (June 25)

A descendant from an important family

Gerritje IJsbrandsdr van Rietwijk was the last prioress. She had entered the convent in or before 1522. In 1560 she is mentioned as the prioress, an office she held until her death.

Gerritje's father held several political offices, among which that of bailiff of Egmond. Her mother belonged to the noble family Van Alkemade. It is very likely that she herself had a hand in making her family donate largely to the convent. She also made large donations herself.

Gifts from the prioress and her family

The prioress herself notated these gifts on a paper bifolium that was included in the parchment donations register. The donations of Gerritje and her family consisted of:

- money, both non-recurring gifts and periodically returning gifts, for instance from rents
- pitancies or money for pitancies
- in 1557 a choir stall.

Gerritje however surpassed her family by her money donating more than 600 rijnsse guldens, her last payment in 1570.

Counter gifts

In the bifolium in the memorial register counter gifts are mentioned in the form of anniversaries and prayer for herself, her family and friends. In the donation of 1570 the notation ends with:

"datsy willen bidden voor mijn ziel ende voort voor alle mijn ouders ende vrienden zielen",

"lest they [the priests who receive money on the anniversary of her death] want to pray for my soul and for the souls of my ancestors and friends".

The coster boec mentions the year of death of Gerritje and the anniversarium on the feast of Adelbert (June 25): each year during the first mass of the day and also a counter gift: "during High Mass two wax candles have to burn on the choir to commemorate sister Gerritje IJsbrandsdr".

The notation in the coster boec is however from a later hand, written perhaps even after the suppression of the convent. Therefore we don't know if the candles ever really burnt for the last prioress.

1573 The convent is pulled down

King Philip II tried to put down the insurrection and the Spanish troops laid siege to several revolting towns, which included Leiden, in the first years of the 1570s. The city government had the buildings in the vicinity of the town demolished to prevent the enemy from using them for cover. This was also the fate of Mariënpoel. The nuns moved to Leiden, where they lived in a house in Pieterskerkhof; some also moved to Haarlem.

Thomas Hermansz., the last rector of Mariënpoel, is mentioned time and again in the diary (1572-1579) of Wouter Jacobsz. Wouter was the prior of the Canons Regular in Gouda (Stein), and the person with whom the nuns had arranged to exchange prayer and Masses for their souls.

He describes Thomas Hermansz. as one of the priests who did not find a fit place to live. At the occasion of one of the visits of his fellow-priest to Amsterdam (where Wouter Jacobsz. lived at the time) he writes: "And so they wandered about, the priests and conventuals, going everywhere, not knowing where to settle down".

Right: Thomas Hermansz. (1518/19-1585) was the last rector of Mariënpoel. He donated a stained glass window to the convent he came from, the convent of the Canons Regular in Gouda (formerly of Stein). In this stained glass window, dated 1557, he is called the rector (prefectus) of the Mariënpoel convent.

Church

1430 Consecration of the church

The church was consecrated on July 20, 1430. It had only one altar. We may assume that it was dedicated to The Virgin Mary, like the convent itself.

On this occasion the bishop gave the nuns an indulgence of forty days. In later years the indulgence was augmented at several occasions. Indulgences were considered to shorten the period of punishment in purgatory by the number of days or years mentioned in the document.

Although the ultimate goal of women entering a convent supposedly was the perfect Christian life, they were still considered sinful human beings. Therefore indulgences were beneficial for their souls. Only saints were supposed to have access to heaven immediately after their death.

The consecration of churches was celebrated every year. For Mariënpoel the bishop officially declared in 1461 that this feast was to be celebrated on the Sunday after the octave of the feast of the Birth of the Virgin (September 8).

±1454 The first Van Zwieten memorial: only two generations

The memorial painting of 1552, which Johanna van Zwieten commissioned, was preceded by an earlier memorial piece of the Van Zwieten family. This is mentioned in the text below Johanna's portrait. The 1552 painting was partially a copy of the older one.

It is very likely that the first memorial showed only two generations, Boudewijn and his wife Ludgard and their children, including family by marriage. As the couple's other children also had children, there is no reason to assume that only the portraits of the children of their son Jan and Catharina van de Abeele were included.

The first memorial was probably made shortly before or after Boudewijn's death in 1454. The 1450s were a decade of mourning for the family. Boudewijn himself died, as well as two sons, one daughter-in-law and two sons-in-law.

The 1552 painting shows the portrait of Evert van Hoogwoude, the second husband of Aleid van Zwieten. As the couple married in 1451, it is very likely that the first memorial, of which the memorial of 1552 is a partial copy, had been made after that year.

It is very likely that the painting of ±1454 contained a portrait of Immesoete van der Marck, the second wife of Jan van Zwieten, as she was married to him in 1451 too. Jan's first wife, Catharina van de Abeele, had died in 1442.

1457 Consecration of four altars

On May 24, 1457 four altars were consecrated, including the already existing high altar. The sacristan's book (coster boeck) offers an elaborate description of the dedications. The high altar was dedicated to St. Mary, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Catharina, St. Ursula "and her beloved companions", and all saints. Ursula had been the patron saint of the Oudewater convent.

There were three more altars. They were probably placed against the choir screen in the nave. One of these, the Holy Sacrament altar, was dedicated to St. Stefan, St. Agnes en St. Elizabeth.

Another altar was consecrated to St. Andrew, St. John the Evangelist, St. Mary Magdalene and all apostles. It was founded by Adriaan van Zwieten, grandson of Boudewijn and Ludgard. The convent received a bequest from Adriaan in 1486 to have the altarpiece painted (ghestoffeert) and to have a tabernacle made for the altar.

Frank van de Boekhorst was the founder of the altar that was dedicated to St. Barbara, St. Dorothea, the 10,000 martyrs, and all Holy Virgins.

1496-1503 Many donations for the church (1)

A large number of gifts for the decoration of the church and the enrichment of the liturgy were registered in the donations book from 1496 till 1503. The wording suggests that the convent played an active role. Donors are mentioned, but we also read about costs for the convent which are met by unspecified proceeds or by unspecified gifts from legacies.

Sculptures

In 1497 a sculpture of the Holy Sepulchre was placed in the chapel of the Holy Cross, behind the high altar; and the statue of Our Lady was illuminated. Donations were made for the apostles and the evangelists in the same year and shortly after. They may have been statues, because there is no mention of paintings. The writing and wording, which is the same for all notations, suggests that the recording was made by the same person.

1496-1503 Many donations for the church (2)

Apostles and evangelists

The donations of the series of apostles and evangelists were probably the result of a campaign in which eleven people participated. We do not know who took the initiative, but Jan, the bastard son of Duivenvoorde, is explicitly mentioned as the first to donate. Was he the initiator or was he the first to respond to the convent's request?

Some of the donors were distantly related to the founder of the convent: Adriaan van de Boekhorst (husband of Catharina van Zwieten, Gijsbrecht's daughter), Willem van Reimerswaal (husband of Catharina, daughter from Jan Boudewijnsz. van Zwieten's first marriage).

Furthermore there was Jan, the bastard of Duivenvoorde, one Floris van Wijngaarden, and one Jan van de Boekhorst, benefactors who cannot be further identified, but who may have belonged to leading families in and around Leiden.

The "Lady of Katz" may have been Maria Wolfertsdr. van Katz, Arend Dirksz. van Zwieten's second wife. If we go by the names she was the only woman to participate in the campaign.

One saint missing

The apostles and evangelists were probably meant to be placed as one group in the church: thirteen saints are mentioned, with the evangelists and apostles St. Mathew and St. John only once. However, one of the two apostles who went by the name of James seems to be missing.

Liturgical requirements

The donations book also mentions a ciborium and paraments as well as unspecified costs for the high altar and the altar of the Holy Sacrament. For the ciborium the nuns used income from legacies and sold a few small valuables from the church. It cost 150 Rijnse Guldens. We know the names of most of the six donors for the donations of the paraments - four chasubles and two albs. Among them are members of the nobility living in or near Leiden: the Lady of Voorburg and Jan van Wassenaar (1497), and the Lady van Halewijn (1498).

The driving force?

Gerrit Dirksz. (†1504), the rector at that time, may have been the driving force behind these activities. Gerrit's name is mentioned in relation to the decoration of the altars and the purchase of the ciborium. His brother Gijsbrecht donated the statue of St. Thomas the apostle, among other things.

Circa 1500: Memorial for deceased rectors?

The scene shows the Visitation, St. Mary's visit to St. Elisabeth, seated on a low wall behind an open grave. It has been argued that this memorial comes from Mariënpoel on the grounds of a major change in the composition. It may have been placed near the grave of the rectors, as it possibly shows four priests of the convent.

Today we see four Canons Regular with their patron saints Jerome and Augustine by the grave. There are dark shades below the right-hand side portrait. X-Rays and infrared reflectography, a technique that shows the preparatory underdrawing, offer an explanation.

The infrared assembly shows that the lines of the underdrawing of St. Augustine continue below the right hand side portrait. This means that the complete figure of this saint was planned in the original composition, and that the fourth portrait was not included in it. The dark shades indicate that the portrait was painted over the already completed paint surface.

Right: Panel, 88 x 104,5 cm. Master of the Spes Nostra, 1490-1510. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

This painting in Memoria in beeld

Circa 1500: Four priests of Mariënpoel

The added portrait is by the same artist and the painting is dated around 1500. This makes Mariënpoel a likely candidate for the original location, for the necrologium shows that four priests died shortly after one another around this date, in 1496, 1496, 1504 and 1507.

The death of Gerard Dirksz. van Heiloo in 1504 may have been the immediate cause for ordering the painting. This priest is mentioned at least seven times in the register of donations from 1492 onwards. He was a go-between for donors and the convent, and his family made donations. He may even have commissioned the painting for the commemoration for himself and two predecessors. When Gerard died less than three and a half years later, the same painter may have been commissioned to add his portrait to the painting.

Although tentative, this is not an unlikely explanation. Memorials were means of communication and they could be adapted to the needs of their owners. Many examples of adaptations can be found in Memoria in beeld

Right: Detail of Master of the Spes Nostra, 1490-1510 and infrared reflectogram assembly.

±1520-1526 A triptych with the Crucifixion

This triptych was originally located in Mariënpoel. The Crucifixion of Christ on the middle panel is accompanied by two representations from the Old Testament which are often combined with a Crucifixion: The sacrifice of Isaac on the left wing, and The brazen serpent on the right wing.

Portraits on the predella

In the predella a Canon Regular and a widow or nun are depicted on the heraldic right hand side, in front of St. Martin of Tours; on the heraldic left we see five Canonesses Regular and Saint Augustine.

Like in the Visitation, a change in the composition has been found in this triptych. Infrared reflectography shows that the head of the priest is covered with another portrait. We do not know whose portraits they are, but it is often assumed that the present portrait is that of Jacob Martensz., the priest of the convent, who is depicted in the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

Right: Panel, Cornelis Engebrechts, ca. ±1522-1526 or 1507-1508. Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden.

This triptych in Memoria in beeld.

±1505-1508 A triptych with the Seven Sorrows of Mary

This triptych shows the Lamentation, surrounded by the six other "Sorrows of Mary". On the left they are: The Presentation in the Temple, the Flight to Egypt and Christ among the doctors; on the right: The carrying of the Cross, The crucifixion and The entombment.

Pride of place for a woman

The Canon Regular kneeling in the heraldic left wing is Jacob Martensz. He can be identified by the patron saints behind him, James Major and Martin of Tours. They are his and his father's name saints. The necrologium of Mariënpoel mentions that Jacob Martensz. was the rector and subsequently a socius from 1508 till his death in 1526, and that he was from the convent of Heiloo.

The triptych is one of the few memorials of the Northern Netherlands in which a woman has been granted pride of place. We have no information about Jacob Martens's family, but as the portrayed woman is kneeling in the heraldic right wing, it is most likely that she is Jacob's mother.

Top right: Panel, middle panel 124,5 x 121,5 cm; side panels 122 x 56,5 cm. Cornelis Engebrechts, ca. 1504-1526. Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden - lower right: Fragment from the necrologium mentioning Jacob Martensz. This work in Memoria in beeld

1552 A memorial with four generations of the Van Zwieten family

In 1552 Johanna van Zwieten had a new memorial for the Van Zwieten family placed in the convent church, as the old one was destroyed with age. The old memorial probably showed two generations of the family, but Johanna wanted her branch included. It is therefore very likely that a major change had to be made.

The memorial of ca. 1454 must have shown the portrait of Immesoete van de Marck, whom her grandfather had married in 1451. In order to represent her own branch correctly, however, Johanna had the portrait repainted to represent her grandmother Catharina van de Abeele (†1442), her grandfather's first wife. It is quite possible that some of the texts were adapted. We may also assume that the old painting was in such bad shape that the painter needed to invent the men's armour and the women's clothes. They are mostly amalgams from the fifteenth and sixteenth and even earlier centuries.

Of course, Johanna could just as well have commissioned two separate memorial paintings: one copy with her great grandparents and their children, and one with her parents and their children. Memorials with two generations seem to have been much more common in the 16th century than memorials with three or four generations. It must, however, have been important to Johanna to link her parents and her brother and herself directly to her great grandfather, the founder of the convent.

1550-1570 The last donations to Mariënpoel

No donations are mentioned for several years after the 1530s, but a total number of 39 gifts are recorded from 1551 till 1570, some of them quite substantial.

Apart from persons that cannot further be identified, the benefactors are Gerritje Ijsbrandsdr. van Rietwijk and her family; priests from Mariënpoel and elsewhere; nuns' parents; some (other) members of the nobility. The gifts were mostly money donations. In some cases it was specified the money was for pittances and meals.

Twice a payment was made for a grave in the convent's church. One of these was from the Utrecht canon Michiel Michielsz. van Helmond who received a burial place in the choir.

Two donations point to decorating activities in the church. Rector Matheus Jordans gave 1 (Pond Groot Vlaams) for the whitening of the church in 1556. One year later family members of Gerritje Ijsbrandsdr. donated 30 Rijnse Guldens for a choir stall "in the church downstairs". This was probably a seat for the priest and his assistants to be used during the liturgical services on the choir.

1571 A new consecration of one of the altars

The altar of St. Andrew, St. John the Evangelist and St. Mary Magdalene, a foundation of Adriaan van Zwieten in 1457, was reconsecrated in 1571. The number of saints was expanded and now it was dedicated to Saints Mary, Andrew, Thomas, John the Evangelist and the other apostles, Nicolas, Willibrord, Adelbert, Mary Magdalen, Mary of Egypt, all Saints and the Holy Cross.

For us, looking back through history, it is remarkable that the nuns continued to care for their convent church even a few years before their convent would be dissolved and even demolished. But the turbulences in the outside world and the Counter Reformation in the Church itself may have inspired the nuns to improve on their religious life; they may even have been positive about their future.