

## SISTER BERENICE TRACHTA, CDP



Sister Berenice Trachta, CDP, the longest living Sister in the 149 year history of the Congregation of Divine Providence, entered eternal life on February 13, 2015 at the age of 105. She was one of seven children born to Frank and Anna (Sicking) Trachta. Sister Berenice was born Angela Susan Trachta in Muenster, Texas on October 23, 1909. She answered God's call to become a Sister of Divine Providence on September 25, 1927 and professed first vows on June 22, 1929. Sister Berenice began her 73 years as a committed educator in a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom at St. Mary's School in San Antonio, Texas in 1929.

Sister Berenice taught a total of seven years at the elementary, middle and high school level while pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. This was followed by her 20 year teaching career in science at Our Lady of Lake College (OLLC) that included earning an MA in Biochemistry from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. When she joined the OLLC faculty in 1938, she was invited to accompany some other Sisters in teaching religion classes to public school children in the neighboring parishes. They taught in private homes, dance halls, San Fernando cemetery grounds... any spot that was available was used.

When Archbishop Lucey came to San Antonio, he determined that all parishes should establish a religious education program, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) to ensure that every Catholic child not enrolled in a Catholic elementary or high school would be taught by an adequately trained catechist. Sister Berenice quickly responded to the challenge by setting up a CCD teacher training program for her college students; volunteers quickly joined in and spread out over Westside San Antonio. Sister's experience allowed her to write two books for training CCD teachers; "Methods of Teaching Religion" (1942) and "Catechetics Today" (1963) were widely used around the country.

During the summers, Sister Berenice earned an MA in Theology from Notre Dame. This was followed in 1962 by one of her most significant accomplishments: a PhD in Sacred Theology from St. Mary's College of Notre Dame, the only place accepting women for this degree.

She returned to Our Lady of the Lake College to teach theology for 27 years, served as department chair for 14 years and continued her religious education work in the parishes. In 1976, she changed her focus from religious education of children and continued spreading her knowledge and love for the Word of God by facilitating adult bible study classes, as many as eight at a time, in parishes all over the city. Many were saddened when her diminishing eyesight required her to end this beloved ministry in 2001 at the age of 92.

Sister Berenice inspired thousands and continued to do so until her very last moments on earth. She was always grateful to all who helped her and easily expressed this gratitude. She perpetually gave her Lord all the credit for her life, her experiences, joy and happiness and all her many accomplishments. Any conversation with Sister Berenice included how very much she loved her Lord. She was beloved by many.

She is survived by her numerous nieces, nephews, and their families and all her other Sisters of Divine Providence. She was preceded in death by her parents, Frank and Anna (Sicking) Trachta and siblings: Harold, Thomas, Vincent and Roman Trachta, Anna Marie Henscheid and Dorothy Rusell.

The Rosary is Wednesday, February 18, 2015 at 4:30 p.m. and the Wake is at 6:30 p.m. A Mass of Resurrection will be Thursday, February 19, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. All services will be in Annunciation Chapel at Our Lady of the Lake Convent Center.

In lieu of flowers, you may wish to make a memorial contribution to the Sisters of Divine Providence, 515 S.W. 24<sup>th</sup> Street, San Antonio, TX 78207-4619.