

**SISTER HELEN LOUISE RIVAS, CDP**  
**1927 - 2020**



Sister Helen Louise Rivas entered eternal life July 21, 2020. Sister Helen was born April 18, 1927 in San Antonio, Texas. Baptized Emma, she was a daughter of Thomas and Virginia (Castillo) Rivas. Her parents, originally Mexican citizens, fled the revolution to settle in the Westside of San Antonio, Texas. With Sister Benitia Vermech, CDP's encouragement she joined the Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence (MCDP) in 1946, later receiving her religious name, Sister Helen Louise.

Throughout her educational process in which she earned a Bachelor and Master of Arts in Education, respectively from Our Lady of the Lake and St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas, Sister Helen Louise realized she had to develop the gifts God had given her to better serve Him. The foundation of her life and 63 years of ministry was to bring people to God and to the Catholic Faith.

For 39 years Sister Helen Louise ministered in Texas as a catechist, social worker, and Director of Religious Education and in the MCDP's Congregational Leadership. In San Antonio she also served as First Assistant to the Superior of the MCDPs, Directress of Novices and Junior Sisters, and Superior of St. Andrew's Convent. In Dallas she served in Diocesan Offices as Director of Religious Education and later as Director of Hispanic Ministries. Her own bilingual-bicultural background gave her an understanding of Hispanic Catholics. She empowered Hispanic laity to take larger responsibility for their faith development.

Sister Helen Louise transferred to the Congregation of Divine Providence (CDP) in 1987, made perpetual vows in 1990, and continued her ministerial service in Dallas. Then in the San Angelo Diocese, she became Co-Director of Lay Ministry and later served as Pastoral Associate in Port Lavaca, Andrews, and Rowena, Texas. During her last 10 years of service in Abilene, Texas, Sister Helen Louise received the *Pro-Ecclesia et Pontifice* Award for her distinguished service to the Church and Pope by lay people and the clergy. She returned to our Lady of the Lake Convent Center in 2011.

She is survived by her sibling Felicitas Gamboa, and all her Sisters of Divine Providence. She is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, and their families. She was preceded in death by her parents, Tomas and Virginia Rivas and siblings: Luz Maria Gutierrez, Stella Garcia, Mary Dolores "Annie", Martin and Harry Rivas.

A rosary and prayer service will be held on Tuesday. A Mass of Resurrection and burial will take place on Wednesday. All services will be private.

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, Texas 78207-4619.