

SISTER MARIA ESTER GUERRA, CDP
February 10, 1929 – October 8, 2018



Sister María Ester Guerra (formerly Mary Goretti), CDP, born February 10, 1929 in San Antonio, Texas, entered eternal life on October 8, 2018, at the age of 89. She was the first of eight children born to José Guerra and Felipa Chavez. She answered God's call to become a Sister of Divine Providence on January 14, 1949 and professed first vows on June 22, 1951.

Sister María Ester was an educator at heart and centered her life on teaching others and learning from them—from elementary, to high school, to parish catechesis and pastoral ministries. She taught in Ennis, Laredo, and San Antonio, Texas, and in Lafayette and Plaquemine, Louisiana, among other places. She also served as a Hospice chaplain in Arizona.

After graduating from Savoy High School, Savoy, TX, Sister María Ester enrolled at Our Lady of the Lake College where she attained a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master's in Education. She later completed a Master's in Theological Studies at Oblate School of Theology.

Sister María Ester's first teaching assignment was in 1951 at San Antonio's San Fernando School where she was a teacher of grades 3 and 4. Three years later, she was sent to teach in Laredo at St. Augustine High School where she stayed for nine years. She continued teaching high school students but remained close to the younger students through her work in parish catechetical programs.

In recounting her life history to her CDP Sister María Christina Ruelas, Sister María Ester recalled how the Sisters who were teaching high schoolers were encouraged to apply for grants to the National Science Foundation as part of their continuing education. Sister María Ester received three such grants and participated in summer institutes in integrated physics and chemistry at Portland University, in radiation physics and biology at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, and biochemistry and new ways of teaching science at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

Providence High School was also one of Sister María Ester's teaching assignments. There she taught biology from 1970 to 1977. During those years, she and three other Sisters lived in what they termed "an experimental community" in the public housing units at Villa Veramendi on the city's west side. She became involved with Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) and participated in the community events of the neighboring parish, St. Timothy, with such leaders as Fathers Gerald Barnes, now bishop of the San Bernardino Diocese in California, Michael (DJ) DeGerolami, and Albert Benavides (deceased). As she phrased it, "For me, it was an eye opener for peace and justice issues."

Sister María Ester also studied at the newly-opened Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC), now the Mexican American Catholic College, when Gustavo Gutierrez and other liberation theologians taught. "I learned firsthand from them what it meant to struggle for justice," she stated in an interview. Her impression was that MACC was a catalyst in calling people in forgotten communities to action.

She is survived by her siblings: Agnes Ricker, Doris Joffrion, Thomas Guerra, Joe Guerra, and Josiephine Zeltner, and all her other Sisters of Divine Providence. She was preceded in death by her parents and siblings: Samuel Guerra and Velia Honeycutt.

Sister Maria Ester's years of service took her to the following places...

- 1951 – 1954 San Fernando School, San Antonio, TX – 3rd-4th grade teacher
- 1955 – 1964 St. Augustine High School, Laredo, TX – Health, science and math teacher
- 1964 – 1967 St. John High School, Ennis, TX – Science, math, Spanish, and religious teacher
- 1967 – 1969 Teurlings High School, Lafayette, LA – Science and math teacher
- 1969 – 1970 St. Joseph High School, Plaquemine, LA – Science and math teacher
- 1970 – 1977 Providence High School, San Antonio, TX – Biology I & II teacher
- 1977 – 1979 CDP Formation, Queretaro, Qto., MX – Last USA Superior, guide and mentor
- 1979 – 1980 St. John the Evangelist parish, San Antonio, TX – Religious education teacher (part-time)
- 1980 – 1981 St. Cecilia parish, San Antonio, TX – Director of religious education
- 1981 – 1987 Archdiocese of San Antonio, TX – Associate director, catechetical ministries
- 1987 – 1988 Institute for Creation Centered Spirituality, Oakland, CA – Field work at Mercy Manor Catholic Healthcare
- 1988 – 1989 St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO – Corporate ministry program
- 1989 – 1992 Mercy Regional Medical Center, Laredo, TX – Staff chaplain
- 1992 – 1993 Yuma Regional Medical Center, Yuma, AZ – Chaplain-in-training for hospice
- 1993 – 2002 Hospice of Yuma, Yuma, AZ – Chaplain, Hispanic bereavement coordinator for hospice
- 2003 – 2005 County Service Family Ministry, Merced Housing, American Sunrise, Koinonia, Regan Hall, Prayer & Presence – volunteer services

Sister María was a good friend of mine. My relationship with her began when we served as chaplain for Hospice. It was an honor to serve as her Medical Power of Attorney. Sr. María was indeed a teacher at heart. Even while Hospice Chaplain she taught people about the love of God and taught more by her example than by her words. She never stopped teaching. We will all miss her smile and her love.

--Sister Sharon Rohde, CDP

Services for Sister María Ester

Rosary: Thursday, October 11, 2018, 4:00 p.m.

Wake: October 11, 6:30 p.m.

Memorial Mass: Friday, October 12, 11:00 a.m.

All services will be in Annunciation Chapel, Our Lady of the Lake Convent

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