

SISTER MARIE ELISE VAN DIJK, CDP
1928 - 2020



Sister Marie Elise van Dijk, CDP, entered eternal life on April 6, 2020, at the age of 92. She was born on March 19, 1928 in Lisse, The Netherlands to Petrus Wilhelmus van Dijk and Katharina Johanna Beuk. Her baptismal name was Wilhelmina Maria Josephina. She was the second oldest of three girls and three boys. Her life's calling was education.

Wilhelmina received a teaching certificate from Providence College in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She was fluent in Dutch, English, and German. She taught in The Netherlands for six years before emigrating to the United States in 1953. She accepted an invitation from Father Peter Blom to start and organize the CCD program at St. Genevieve in Lafayette, Louisiana. It was there that she was introduced to the Sisters of Divine Providence. The kindness and hospitality of the Sisters moved Wilhelmina to act upon her childhood dream to become a woman religious. She answered God's call to become a Sister of Divine Providence on September 12, 1955 and professed first vows on June 22, 1957.

Sister Marie Elise received a Bachelor of Science and Masters in Education from Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, Texas. She also became certified in high school mathematics and German.

Her leadership skills, and natural ability in the education field were quickly recognized. After six months in her first teaching mission, she was called to serve as principal at St. Joseph School in Cloutierville, Louisiana. Those ten years led to a total of 38 years as a Catholic School Principal in various Texas cities. During 23 of those administrative years she also taught in the classroom. Between 1971 and 1981 she worked as a math teacher in the Edgewood Independent School District. In order to better communicate with some of her schools' populations, she enrolled in weekend community college courses to learn Spanish. She became proficient in this fourth language.

It is not surprising that her retirement from education easily transitioned from principal of St. Louis School in Castroville, Texas to part-time Religion Coordinator at the parish. She also started volunteering at her congregation's Moyer Retreat Center in Castroville. She was a familiar face in the retreat center's dining room during hundreds of ACTS retreats. She gave all retreatants clear instructions on how to clear and wash the dishes. Her service in Castroville ended less than two years ago. Her strong call to service and her abandonment to Divine Providence remained intact until she was called home.

She is survived by siblings Elizabeth Verhag (Piet), Theo van Dijk (Sjaan) and sister-in-law Riet van Dijk, 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 Petrus Wilhelmus van Dijk and Katharina Johanna Beuk and siblings (and their spouses): Willem van Dijk (Gre), Lien Laeveld (Max), and Piet van Dijk.

Due to the current circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 virus, a Memorial Mass will be celebrated at a later date, when her whole community can gather to celebrate her life.

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