

## **Sister Maria Antonieta Benavides**

Our beloved Sister Maria Antonieta Benavides died peacefully on March 3, 2010, surrounded by her Sisters in the Torrance, California community. It was just about two weeks previous that she had celebrated her 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday, thoroughly enjoying a Mariachi band of guitars and violins. Her motto, “Through the Cross, to the Light” epitomized her life and spiritual quest.

Sister Antonieta was born February 16, 1917 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her parents instilled in their six children a deep faith and devotion to Mary. It is not surprising that Sister Antonieta became a religious and one brother a Capuchin Priest.

Sister Antonieta entered the Little Company of Mary Sisters in Buenos Aires on January 2, 1950. On the evening of her receiving the religious habit, she left to begin her novitiate training at the Motherhouse in Rome. One can only fathom the personal sacrifice entailed, in leaving her deeply loved family and country. Nonetheless, her joy was in her total self-giving to God, through love and service to His people.

Upon returning to Argentina in 1953, Sister was enrolled in Nursing School. She excelled in her studies and LCM spirituality. Though she participated in multi-faceted nursing assignments, she is primarily remembered for her many years of outstanding family centered ministry in the Maternity Department, especially to those experiencing loss.

In spite of a myriad of professional and community responsibilities, Sister Antonieta maintained a perfect balance in her life, enjoying it to the fullest. Her thrust was to continue to develop her talents and appreciation of languages and the fine arts, centering prayer, spiritual direction, and socializing with family and friends. She wholeheartedly participated in all celebrations. Thus, she found avenues to facilitate her adapting to the cultural diversities encountered in an international community.

In 1976, Sister Antonieta was missioned to Torrance, California. Her knowledge and experience, fluency in four languages, as well as her compassionate presence were a godsend, especially to the Spanish speaking families in the maternity wing.

Sister Antonieta took the initiative to develop computer skills in order to maintain daily contact with her family and to read the current news of Buenos Aires. She rejoiced with her family in home visits every year or two as circumstances permitted.

During the past few years of gradual decline in physical and creative abilities, Sister Antonieta’s spiritual strengths became even more evident. She courageously embraced her daily burdens and inconveniences with faith and acceptance, while exercising new ways to channel God’s love and peace.

Many were the mourners in the eclectic group paying her tribute during the evening vigil and funeral mass the following day, March 8<sup>th</sup>, celebrated by Father John Brennan, SMA, supportive friend of 40 years. A Muslim neighbor was granted his request to speak a few words during the vigil, noting it would be his first time in a church and it would be an honor to wear his Muslim dress. A Japanese woman spoke of the friendship developed during their guitar lessons. Another woman spoke of their socializing in a senior aerobics class.

Indeed, Sister Antonieta was a faithful disciple in her spiritual journey through valleys and peaks, "Through the Cross to the Light." In that overwhelming light of Christ, we trust Sister Antonieta is beholding her entire family, that is her Father, Jose Maria Benavides; Mother, Maria Magdaline Casares; and 5 siblings, Capuchin Priest Rev. Leon Carlos, Doctor Jose Mario, Maria Luisa, Maria Susana and Pedro Pablo, in the company of Venerable Mary Potter and the many LCM Sisters with whom she once walked.

Sister Jean Stickney, LCM  
for the Torrance, California Community;  
Sister Mary John Schlax, LCM  
Sister Mildred Radziewicz, LCM  
Sister Terrence Landini, LCM  
Sister Gloria Harper, LCM