



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PO BOX 100 OLDENBURG, IN 47036

WWW.OLDENBURGFRAUCISCANS.ORG

FACEBOOK: FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF OLDENBURG



June 6, 2014

Dear Sisters, Associates, Family, Friends and Co-Workers,

S. CARMEN DE BARROS, OSF

“When the end comes, I want peace and quiet so I’m ready to meet my God.” Our Sister Carmen de Barros wrote these words about her preferences for the time of her death. They were fulfilled as, surrounded by many who loved her, she very quietly, peacefully, took her last breath on Tuesday evening, June 3, 2014. Hearing her final “si,” the God whom she loved and had served for 91 years, welcomed her to her eternal home.

Carmen Enriqueta was born to Leonardo and Francisca (Coll) de Barros in Havana, Cuba on March 10, 1923. The following year, her brother, Leonardo was born. When Carmen was five years old, her father died, so she, her mother and her brother joined a large extended family in the home of her grandmother, Josephine. There, Carmen and the rest of the family had lots of fun playing games, singing and dancing.

The Daughters of Charity taught Carmen at La Immaculada Concepcion School from the first grade through high school. Her compassionate nature caused her to plan to enter their community some day and work with lepers. The Holy Spirit had other ideas. Through a strange series of events involving the Apostolic Delegate from Havana and S. Mary John at Marian College (now University), Carmen and another girl from her school, Maria Carballeira, were offered scholarships and became the first international students at Marian in 1940.

After college, Carmen again thought of entering the Daughters of Charity. She even wrote a letter inquiring, but received no answer in three months. So, she instead entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg on September 5, 1944. Several years later, Carmen learned that her letter had never reached the Daughters of Charity.

Although it was difficult for Carmen to enter a community so far from home and family, she was consoled when her mother came to Oldenburg to see her receive the habit and the name Sister Francis Mary. Francisca said, “I go in peace because I know you love the Sisters and it’s a peaceful place here. Also, I can see that they love you.”

Her mother was right. Carmen was greatly loved and respected by Sisters, Associates, students, friends, co-workers and others. Wherever she went, she seemed to bring joy. It was no surprise when Carmen later chose Casa Franciscana de Alegria (Franciscan House of Joy) as the name for the discernment house for Hispanic women she founded in Chicago.

Carmen taught Spanish, biology, religion and whatever else was needed at various high schools for over forty years. In 1987, she requested a sabbatical at our House of Prayer while she discerned a new ministry. Carmen had had a dream in which young Hispanic women were coming up stairs to enter the community. She perceived this as a call from God to begin a discernment house for Hispanic women. The General Council approved her plan. Carmen wanted to begin the house in Indianapolis where she was familiar, after having taught at Scecina and St. Mary Academy, but the Archbishop at the time did not think there were enough Hispanic families in the city. He recommended that she go to Chicago.

It had taken great courage for the young Carmen to leave home and family in Cuba for an unknown country, city and college. Carmen called upon this courage and her trust in God as she again left the comfortable and familiar

for a new adventure. Although she didn't drive, Carmen soon learned to get almost anywhere in Chicago by bus. She began her ministry living in an apartment with one other Sister. Soon she desired a larger space where she could welcome women for gatherings and to stay overnight for retreats. An empty parish rectory provided the perfect setting for Casa Franciscana de Alegria. For fourteen years, Carmen ministered in the Hispanic community in Chicago. She worked with the Vocation Office, in the parishes, and, as was her pattern, helped in any way she could. Countless individuals benefitted from her hospitality and spiritual guidance at Casa.


Although no women entered the community as a result of her efforts, many spent time at the house and several women and men became Associates of the Oldenburg Franciscans. Carmen was their contact Sister and faithfully translated materials for them, including our complete rule and constitution, "Vision and Journey."

When Casa Franciscana de Alegria was closed, the community wanted to continue to help Hispanic young people, so the Carmen de Barros Scholarship Fund was established. It provides assistance for Hispanic students who want to attend a Catholic high school. Carmen's many friends and former students have contributed generously to this fund which has already aided over twenty students.

Carmen never really retired, even though she moved to the Motherhouse in 2002. She continued to be willing to help in any way she could. A special joy for her was remembering the Sisters' birthdays and feastdays. Since she had celebrated many occasions without members of her family present, she was concerned that a Sister might not receive cards or notes on her special days. S. Evelyn Forthofer has continued this custom with Carmen's help to the present.

A few months before her death, Carmen said: "I have lived a good life. I helped people as best I could. I am grateful for all the good things God gave me and especially the good through others." We are grateful for Carmen, for her life and for her love and prayers for us. We offer our sympathy to her nephews Len, Ed and Carlos and their families, to S. Evelyn Forthofer and her family, to Carmen's classmate S. Angela Betsch and Sister friends, to our nursing and pastoral care staff.

Carmen is no doubt asking "the Lady," Mary of Guadalupe, to intercede for our community, her family and for all those in need. She is probably speaking Spanish with anyone who will listen. And, we know she is enjoying the wonderful peace and quiet of union with her God.



S. Maureen Irvin, OSF
for the Council

S. CARMEN DE BARROS – *formerly S. Francis Mary*

Birth: March 10, 1923

Entrance into Religious Life: September 5, 1944

Entrance into Eternal Life: June 3, 2014

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. CARMEN SERVED:

1947-1954	Our Lady of Angels, St. Bernard, OH	1977-1987	Immaculate Conception Academy, Oldenburg, IN
1954-1967	Scecina High School, Indianapolis, IN	1987-1988	Sabbatical
1967-1975	St. Mary Academy, Indianapolis, IN	1988-2002	Casa Franciscana, Chicago, IL
1975-1977	Scecina High School, Indianapolis, IN	2002-2014	Motherhouse, Oldenburg, IN

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Weigel Funeral Home – visit their website to view Sister's online memorial, and if desired, an online condolence may be left on the site to share with her family and the Franciscan Sisters – www.Weigelfh.com

Memorial Donations in Sister's memory may be given online at www.OldenburgFranciscans.org