

In Loving Memory

Sister Maria Teresa Cruz, SSND



Birth
December 2, 1933

Baptism
December 15, 1933

Profession
July 11, 1955

Death
October 19, 2012

Burial
Notre Dame of
Elm Grove Cemetery
Elm Grove, Wisconsin

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

Eusebia (Sylvia) Cruz was born December 2, 1933 to Jesus and Rosalia (Castro Arceo) Borja Cruz in Yona, Guam, where, at St. Francis Church, she was baptized. She had five sisters and eight brothers. When her father died in 1941, Sylvia's mother had the full responsibility for raising the 14 children. "We all worked hard at home," she wrote in her autobiography, "though we were very happy children."

After six years at a public school, Eusebia completed her elementary education at St. Francis School, where she was taught by School Sisters of Notre Dame. The sisters made a great impression on her. When she first told her mother that she wanted to become a sister she did not approve. Eusebia made her application to enter without her mother's permission and received a big scolding! Her desire to be a sister increased day by day and on July 2, 1951, Eusebia entered the SSND Aspiranture in Yona, Guam, where she completed her high school education. Having developed a great devotion to the Little Flower, when she was received into the novitiate, she chose the name Maria Teresa. She professed first vows on July 11, 1955.

Sister Maria Teresa was a born teacher – having begun to practice by teaching her younger siblings. She earned a B.A. in special education in 1970 and an M.A. in elementary education in 1973 from the University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam. Additionally, in 1978, she completed a program in religious education at Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee. She served in the ministry of education for 50 years, including service in primary grades, high school classes, special education and religious education, as well as in administration. She had a special love for children and adults who benefited from extra help. Her ministry locations included: St. Francis, Yona, Guam; Mount Carmel, Agat, Guam; San Vicente, Barrigada, Guam; Department of Education, Agana, Guam; St. Mary's Special School, St. Louis, Mo.; and Notre Dame High School, Talofoto, Guam.

Sister Maria Teresa used her many gifts in a variety of ways. She beautified the grotto at Notre Dame in Guam by planting flowers and fruits. She loved flowers and often pressed them to make cards. She enjoyed baking stollen and cookies for the holidays. As an organizer and a very caring volunteer, she carried out all the responsibilities given to her. Often she expressed her gratitude for the privilege of renewal time, discovering again and again how much God really loved her.

In 2007, she left the classroom and responded to SSND community service needs in Talofoto, Guam, and in 2009 she joined the Notre Dame of Elm Grove community where she volunteered in the sewing room and served through her prayers and presence. Among her companions in retirement she made "space for grace" and often remarked, "We're too blessed to be stressed." She took time to name and sing to the birds. One of them, "checha," is named after her. One very important commitment in her week was to share at Lectio Divina, the sharing of Sunday's Gospel.

continued

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**School Sisters
of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

Sister Maria Teresa had great devotion to Mother Theresa. In her last hours she prayed aloud, "I want to do whatever God wants." Shortly before meeting her Beloved she asked to receive the Eucharist. Her soul now rejoices in God her Savior.

Sister Maria Teresa is survived by her brothers John (Rita) Cruz, Trinidad (Isabel) Cruz; her sister, Sr. Mary Eucharita Cruz, SSND; sisters-in-law Pilar Cruz and Terrisita Cruz; many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, great-grandnieces, great-grandnephews, other relatives, dear friends and the SSND Community. She was preceded in death by her parents, six brothers and four sisters.

By Sister Marie Rose Van Deurzen, SSND