



Birth  
May 8, 1936

Baptism  
August 23, 1936

Profession  
August 2, 1954

Death  
July 25, 2020

Burial  
Santa Maria in Ripa  
Cemetery, St. Louis,  
Missouri

*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

## *In Loving Memory*

### Sister Francis Rose Rivers

The seventh of nine children was born to Trinidad (Vasquez) and Frank Rivers in Tulare, California, on May 8, 1936. She was baptized at St. Aloysius Church in Tulare on August 23, 1936 and named Eva. She remained the youngest in the family as the two girls born after her died within a few days of their births. The seven living children included four boys and three girls. Her Mexican born parents taught her the importance of faith and education as she grew up experiencing the difficulties of crossing cultures.

Eva attended Lincoln Elementary School in Tulare and received religious instructions from the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Victory. She grew to know and love the sisters and wanted to become one of them. In 1948, the pastor announced that the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) were coming to teach in the new parish school. She had accelerated two grades and was placed in the eighth grade at St. Aloysius School. Shortly before graduation, the students were given a questionnaire which included the question, "What do you plan to become?" Eva came home that day with a pamphlet on the Aspiranture at Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis. With her parents' approval, at 13 years of age, she left her family, traveled alone on the train and entered the Aspiranture the following September. Eva completed her high school education in three years. She remained in St. Louis during the summer months because the distance to California prevented her from returning home for summer vacation. During this time she was able to acquire the credits needed to graduate.

Eva entered the candidature on August 23, 1952, at the age of 16. She was the first person from California to enter SSND. During the second semester, she was sent to Sacred Heart, Rich Fountain, Missouri, to teach grades one to three. She was received into the novitiate on August 1, 1953, and given the name Mary Francis Rose. She professed first vows on August 2, 1954, and final vows on August 2, 1960.

Sister Francis Rose received a bachelor's degree in English from Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, in 1966; a master's degree in English from San Fernando Valley State, California, in 1967 and a master's degree in education from the University of California, Northridge, California, in 1984.

Sister Francis Rose spent over 40 years in Catholic education as a teacher and principal. In California, she taught at St. Helen, Fresno; the Preparatory Institute of Notre Dame, Sunland; and St. Paul High School, Santa Fe Spring. She was principal at St. Anthony High School, Effingham, Illinois; Bishop Conaty High School, Los Angeles; and St. Marianne, Pico Rivera, California. She was the first woman principal at Bishop Conaty High School.

From 1979 to 1983, she served as a member of the former St. Louis Provincial Council. In 2003, Sister Francis Rose transitioned from formal education to parish ministry, serving Hispanics in rural Missouri. She ministered at Sacred Heart Parish, Verona and Holy Trinity Parish, Aurora. She also ministered as Chaplain at the Tyson Foods' chicken processing plant in Monett, Missouri. As the "chicken chaplain," she was a bridge builder between the recent Hispanic immigrants who made up most of the workforce and the Anglos. Fondly called

*continued*

# In Loving Memory



*Sister Francis Rose Rivers*



To make a memorial gift,  
please visit our secure  
online donation page  
[www.ssndcentralpacific.org/donate](http://www.ssndcentralpacific.org/donate)



School Sisters  
of Notre Dame  
Central Pacific Province

Transforming the world  
through education

Madre, Sister Francis Rose walked through the plant wearing a lab coat, hairnet, rubber boots and sound protectors. She talked to the workers over lunch hour and during breaks, counseling them and helping them with medical issues or family problems, holding short religious services and assisting them in whatever they needed as they struggled in a new and challenging environment. She was the first woman chaplain for the Monett plant.

In 2007, she received the Distinguished Alumna Award from Notre Dame High School, St. Louis, Missouri. In 2012, Sister Francis Rose came to Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis. She volunteered at Theresa Center and began tutoring Notre Dame High School students. She was missioned to Veronica House in July 2020. 10 days later, July 25, 2020, she quietly returned home to her God.

On July 29, 2020, a beautiful summer morning, a burial service was held at Theresa Center. SSND, classmates, friends, former students whom she had tutored, members of Notre Dame High School faculty and several students came together to celebrate her life. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery. A memorial Mass will be celebrated at a later date.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her two infant sisters, her brothers: Frank, Anthony, Louis and Adam; her sisters: Carolyn Rivers and Dolores Oford.

Sister Francis Rose's life was an example of a compassionate and loving SSND who served in the ministries of educator, administrator, chaplain, tutor, translator and interpreter. Her bilingual skills and her own experience as a child of immigrants enabled her to be a bridge builder between Hispanic immigrants and Anglos. She was an example of living a "Theology of Accompaniment," respecting each person she met as an image of her God. Her optimistic personality and sense of humor were evidence of a warm and gentle person. She was a participant in the RUSH Religious Study, thereby continuing to teach others through the research that has been done. May she now be embraced by her loving God and her family members as she enters eternal life.

*By Sister Carol Marie Willt, SSND*