

BIOGRAPHY

As soon as possible after the death of the RSCJ, please send to the secretariat a biographical account giving the chief facts of the person's life. One or two pages are usually sufficient.

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Esperanza Jasso Beltrán

April 23, 1932 – November 15, 2008

Our sister, Esperanza Jasso, was born into a military family in Mexico City, the only daughter of Brigadier General Manuel Jasso, whose genes she clearly inherited. In fact, the story is told that when Esperanza returned to Mexico during the anti-clerical days when religious habits were forbidden, she arrived in secular clothes. When her father saw her, he sternly reprimanded her for not being in her habit and demanded that she put one on immediately.

Esperanza was educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Menlo Park, California, where she received a great love for the missions, as well as a vocation to the Society of the Sacred Heart. She entered the novitiate at Kenwood, Albany, New York, and made vows on June 15, 1953, after which she spent a year of study at Manhattanville College. After profession in Rome on February 10, 1959, she returned to Mexico where she was deeply loved as mistress general at our houses in San Luis Potosí, Monterrey, and Guadalajara.

In the 1980's Esperanza left Mexico to join Carol Putnam, RSCJ, in Indiantown, Florida, where Carol had established a beautiful work of education for poor migrant Hispanic children. Within a few years, at the invitation of Margaret Brown, RSCJ, director of schools at Sacred Heart Schools, Menlo, Esperanza returned to her beloved Menlo to undertake, with the students, a ministry of social outreach to the poor at Sacred Heart Parish, San Jose, where Nancy Koke, RSCJ, was already involved.

Meanwhile, when it was clear that Carol Putnam's work had been completed in Florida, she moved to the desert of California, the town of Mecca, which she considered the poorest town in the West. Within a few years, she became ill and eventually died. As soon as it was possible, Esperanza left Menlo and went to Mecca to take up Carol's work. There she lived for fourteen years in a tiny trailer on church property, where she ministered to both migrants and Native Americans.

Esperanza interacted with her religious sisters in San Diego quite regularly during all those years. On one occasion she reported to them that government helicopters, in pursuit of undocumented migrants, hovered over her little town, making it a veritable war zone. Frightened mamas brought their children to the trailer where she lived for sanctuary.

Convinced of the need to develop leadership skills of her people, Esperanza engaged her sisters from the Spiritual Ministry Center in San Diego, Eileen Bearss, Betty Boyter, Susan Campbell and Mary Ann Foy, to come monthly for a year to help her realize this dream. In time, her ministry focused on the elementary school in Mecca, where she spent long hours helping both teachers and administrators in their task of raising standards within the school. One of Espy's strongest supporters during all this time was Frances Tobin, RSCJ, who visited her quite regularly and assisted many of her people with documentation.

A testimonial to the services Esperanza rendered to the diocese of San Bernardino and to the Mecca community are the twenty citations and awards she received over the years. Strong woman that she was, no one ever imagined her leaving the scene of her beautiful ministry. However, God knew that his disciple was exhausted by her years of dedication to the poor and marginalized. In the summer of 2008 she suffered a series of strokes, rendering her unable to continue her valiant ministry. She was driven Oakwood, where, after hospitalization, she returned to Guadalajara. There, only a matter of days after her arrival, at the very moment she was being celebrated by her many friends in the town of Mecca, surrounded by her sisters, God took her home on November 15, 2008.