

## IN MEMORIAM



# Sr. Louise Margaret (Peg) Williams

(Sister Mary Helena)

BORN: February 1919

ENTERED CONGREGATION: September 3, 1934

DIED: August 26, 2010

**T**oday we gather to celebrate the life of Sister Louise Margaret Williams, better known to us as Sister Peg. We welcome her nieces and nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews who are joining us in this celebration.

Louise Margaret (Peg) was born in February 1919, in Dayton, Ohio, the sixth and last child of Peter and Louise Margaret (Meikenhaus) Williams. Her mother was 46 when Peg was born and her father was 65. Her siblings had already left home or were teenagers. Her oldest brother and his wife had a daughter born within days of Louise Margaret's birth. When Peg was eleven months old, her niece's mother died, and Peg and Grace were raised as sisters.

Peg went to grade school at St. Mary's in Dayton. Two sisters who inspired her to become a Sister of the Precious Blood were Sisters Leontia Walter and Alacoque Hartman. After grade school she attended Precious Blood High School, and on Sept. 3, 1934 entered the Sisters of the Precious Blood as a postulant. As a novice she received the name of Sister Mary Helena.

Following first vows, she began a 30-year career in education, serving as a grade and high school teacher and, occasionally, as principal. Her service took her to schools in Ohio, Arizona and California. A special time was her nearly ten years at San Luis Rey Academy in Oceanside, Calif. Since it was boarding

school, she not only taught but also took care of the third- and fourth-graders on a 24/7 basis! Never had she imagined that among the many skills she would learn as mother and comforter would be that of braiding hair!

A phrase from Psalm 25 guided her life: "Lord teach me your ways and show me your paths." After she completed her teaching career, the Lord led her down a number of different paths.

First she was called to a three-year term as councilor for the congregation's Western Region. This was followed by service in parish ministry at St. Anne's in Arvada, Colo. There she attended to the senior members of the parish, visiting them in their own homes as well as in nursing homes and hospitals. She also began prayer groups.

As early as the 1950s, a longing for the cloistered life surfaced in Peg's heart. She considered joining the CPPS cloister in New Riegel, Ohio, in the 1970s, but the Lord had other plans for her.

Father John Kane, a Redemptorist priest under whom she had made several retreats, shared with her his plans to begin a house of prayer at Picture Rocks Retreat House in Cortaro, Ariz. Peg felt called to join him in this endeavor and became co-founder of the Desert House of Prayer, which began on Jan. 7, 1974.

There Peg dedicated three to six hours a day to prayer, besides accompanying guests on their spiritual journeys, maintaining the kitchen, doing the weekly

shopping and keeping the books. She felt that her nearly 25 years at Desert House were the crowning point in her life of ministry. One of the many people she walked with, a psychologist, recounted what a wonderful, joyful and peaceful inspiration she was for him. When he felt dreary and his clients' woes weighed heavily on him, he would remember her humming or her radiant smile or her gentle words, and they would bring him sweet relief.

In 2000 because of failing health, Sister Peg came to Salem Heights. She enjoyed singing in the choir and she brought joy, laughter, enthusiasm, peace, love and compassion to all she met. In November of 2009 her health had deteriorated to the point that she needed to move to Emma Hall, the nursing care unit at the adjacent Maria-Joseph Living Care Center. There her joy, her gratitude and her pleasant manner won the hearts of all those who served her.

Sister Peg faced her last weeks excited and waiting for the God she loved so much to come get her. She spoke of going to God as excitedly as a child waiting to go to the zoo!

On Thursday, August 26, her waiting was over. While the sisters with her were praying the fourth Glorious Mystery, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven, the Lord called her home. How joyous must have been that encounter between Peg and the God she loved!

—Sister Edna Hess