Sisters of the Holy Family

Sister M. Mercedes Braga, SHF
November 10, 1928 – November 5, 2019

Sister M. Mercedes Braga, SHF, died peacefully at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Holy Family in Fremont on November 5, 2019, just five days short of her 91st birthday.. She was born Marie Louise Braga on November 10, 1928, in Glendale, California, and entered the Sisters of the Holy Family from Our Lady of the Wayside Parish in Portola Valley, California, on January 6, 1951, at the age of 22.

Sister Mercedes served in catechetical ministry and day homes in the Dioceses of Oakland, San Francisco, Monterey, Fresno, Sacramento, Hawaii and Nevada, in places from rural to urban. In 1996 she returned to the Diocese of Sacramento, and in 1998 began working with Wellspring Women's Center, where she remained until health concerns brought her back to the Motherhouse in 2018

Wellspring Women's Center is about belonging. It is a place where women belong, a place of hospitality as well as a source of real assistance for women and their children. Sister Mercedes found a sense of belonging there, too, where she was challenged to use her many gifts to the full, and even stretched to use new gifts. The only Holy Family Sister in the area, she lived for many years with members of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and found welcome and belonging with them as well as with Holy Family.

Just a few days before her death, the Holy Family Sisters had an anointing service for her, and stories of her many escapades kept us all laughing, including Sister Merce. As she left the service in her wheelchair, she was singing, "I Could Have Danced All Night." We can imagine her now, dancing before the Lord in her coat of many colors!

The Mass of Resurrection was celebrated on Wednesday, November 13, in the Motherhouse Oratory. Burial followed that afternoon at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma.