Remembering Sister Electa (Mary Simon) Herringer  
March 8, 1918 – June 6, 2012

Unselfish and devoted service characterized Sister Electa’s life and ministry as an IHM.

Electa was born in Flint, Mich., on March 8, 1918, to Adam Henry Herringer and Mary Magdalen Schmidt. She was the oldest of six children. Catherine (Sister Romilda, IHM), Rita, Bernard, Placidus (Porky) and Patrick were her younger siblings. Since Electa’s father came from Ontario, she always loved that area. Her mother was an avid church volunteer, and Electa learned her first lessons in service from her when she helped her mother with altar linens and vestments. Electa’s strong devotion to the Rosary was fostered by saying the family Rosary nightly as a child.

In 1938, one year after graduation from St. Michael’s High School, Electa entered the congregation along with her sister Catherine, to whom she was very close. As a Novice, because she was a remarkable seamstress, Electa was put in charge of Mother Leocadia’s clothing. This talent would serve her well in retirement.

From 1946-2006 Electa served in more than a dozen different locations in Michigan mostly as a primary teacher. Even though she taught a variety of grades (one through six), Electa preferred teaching the younger children, especially preparing them for First Eucharist and Reconciliation. Sister Therese Mary Rudell also comments that children quickly learned what things were acceptable and what things were not acceptable without Electa saying a word. Her “teacher look” said it all. She really needed the look in her first year of teaching, since she had 90 children in her first class of first graders.

Shortly after going to St. Philip’s in Battle Creek in the ’70s, Electa’s life changed dramatically. In 1971 she fell and broke her hip. She gave up her teaching career and became a clerical assistant.
Electa also met Therese Mary with whom she forged a long standing friendship. She became Therese Mary’s housemate and travel companion. They enjoyed going on trips, especially cruises together whenever they could. Electa also assisted Therese Mary when she was director of religious education at St. Jerome Parish in Battle Creek.

In 1975 tragedy struck Electa’s family. Her sister Catherine (Sister Romilda) was killed in a terrible automobile accident traveling to Flint to celebrate New Year’s Eve with the family. Electa did her best to comfort and help the family cope with this devastating loss.

Undaunted by physical injury and personal tragedy, Electa continued her ministry at St. Philip’s for the next 30+ years. She and Therese Mary were involved with many parish activities such as taking ticket money, serving food, cleaning up. Whatever Electa was asked to do, according to Therese Mary, she did graciously. She always gave 100 percent to any task. Perfection was Electa’s goal, and love of the parish as its people was her motivation. Because of the time she gave and the efficiency she demonstrated, St. Philip’s gave Electa an award naming her the silent CEO of the parish.

In 2006 because of ill health, Electa retired to the Motherhouse where she put her talent for knitting and crocheting to good use. She knits dolls for children with AIDS in Africa, and makes things for the Christmas sale to help the community.

Electa, for years, day by day, come what may, you have sung out the goodness of God with your life. Your quiet example which you considered so important in sharing the Good News has spoken volumes to us of God’s love for and fidelity to us. We will always remember your message of generous service and using God's gifts well.

Submitted by Mary Ellen Loren, IHM, with input from Therese Mary Rudell, IHM
June 8, 2012