

# Carmen Armenta Lara

I was born fourth of 10 children and raised in a small family rancho in Chihuahua, Mexico. When I was 13, we moved to the small town of Bachiniva; I left school and worked in the apple orchards.



We moved to the city of Juarez when I was 18 to allow my younger brothers to continue their schooling.

The faith passed down through generations is an integral part of who I am. It has guided me in the difficult times as well as the joyful ones. Each stage of my life has been guided by faith and has helped shape my life as the potter shapes the vessel.

I met IHM Sisters Julie Slowik, Lisandra Pedraza Burgos and Marcella Regan when they helped with a Bible study group at my mother's home in 1988. When Marcella returned to Michigan and Lisandra returned to Puerto Rico, Julie invited me to join her for six months. Once Julie shared the news that I was interested in religious life with the Mission Unit, Caminando Cantando, Sister Maureen Kelly arrived in Mexico in 1990 to share IHM community and to support the process requesting entrance to the congregation.



I became an associate in 1992 and was then received in 1994. The IHM community offered a testimony of religious life, much more than I ever expected.



Each sister received me with open arms and so much love and gave me the confidence to feel I belonged. They treated me with dignity and respect, and even though I didn't speak English, many made efforts to communicate with me. In 1996, I made my first vows in the Chapel Maria Madre de Dios; in

1999, I professed my final vows at the Motherhouse.

I returned to Juarez in 2000 and began my ministry in the Parish of Jesus Obrero, serving in the chapel community of Sta. Elena de la Cruz. I also participated in the Juniorate Program of the religious congregations of Juarez.

During novitiate, I studied open schooling in Puerto Rico with a tutor as well as my studies in the Intercongregational Formation Program. Back in Juarez, I completed the primary and secondary levels in a GED program. I have participated in various workshops and courses in leadership, the Universal Catechism, Scriptures and theology.

In 2006, I arrived at Sto. Toribio Parish in the community of Cristo de la Montaña Chapel. I began by bringing potable water to the seniors and ill of this area, which also lacks paved streets and public transportation. Now, I coordinate the different aspects of pastoral ministry, including working with the community and parish in fundraising and construction of the Chapel.

I thank God for the love, respect and warmth I have received since becoming part of this grand IHM family.

I am appreciative of the acceptance I experienced as the first Mexican member of the congregation and the leap of faith on the part of both the congregation and me. We placed our confidence and hearts in God's hands.