



**In death,  
we say our ultimate yes  
to our Creator.  
Trusting in God's power  
to bring us to fulfillment of life,  
we see death as an act of worship:  
in dying, we proclaim God, God;  
and ourselves, creatures.**

**Although in grief,  
the community gratefully affirms this,  
our final earthly proclamation  
of the good news...  
In hope and peace,  
we enter into the joy of the Lord!**

*You Are Sent #47*



*Sister Maria Marta Avila*

*Born*  
**September 30, 1934**

*Professed*  
**July 31, 1958**

*Ministry*  
**seamstress, community service,  
ministry to Mexican-Americans ~  
Iowa, Missouri**

*Died*  
**December 8, 2007**



**School Sisters of Notre Dame  
of St. Louis**

The eighth of 10 children was born to Adela (Posadas) and Isidoro Avila on September 30, 1934, in Santa Rosa del Norte, Tela Honduras. She was baptized on August 30, 1935, in San Antonio de Padua Church in Tela and named Sofia. She had five sisters and four brothers. When she was 6 years old, her mother died in childbirth. Following her mother's death, Sofia's father placed her with her oldest sister in El Progreso. She cared for Sofia like a mother, helping her through grade school and teaching her to embroider and sew.

Sofia always wanted to become a sister but had little hope of being one since there were none in her hometown. In 1952, the School Sisters of Notre Dame came to El Progreso to catechize during the summer. Three years later, she asked her father and sister for permission to enter SSND. They did not approve of her going to the United States to become a sister because she did not know the language or customs. Since she was almost 21 years old, a priest advised her to trust in God and go ahead. She left Honduras on August 20, 1955, with Sisters Rosaire Helling and Helene Gerstner.



Sofia attended school at St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, MS, as a boarding pupil. On August 27, 1956, she entered the candidature. At Christmas, she learned that her father had died on December 17. God's grace helped her during this trial. She was received into the novitiate on July 30, 1957, and given the name Maria Marta. She professed first vows on July 31, 1958, and final vows on July 31, 1964.

Following profession, Sister Maria Marta served as an aide in the motherhouse infirmary and sewed for the postulants and novices at the motherhouse. She ministered to the

Mexican-Americans at Sacred Heart parish, Fort Madison, IA, and received a silver medallion award for outstanding service.



In 1977, she became a U.S. citizen. After 10 years in Fort Madison, she ministered at Villa Gesu where she sewed for the sisters and did other forms of community service for 18 years. In 1999, she moved to the motherhouse and sewed for the sisters at Anna House.

In 2004, a spinal cord inflammation affected her ability to walk, and she was transferred to Anna House.

During the following years, several surgeries weakened her. In September 2007, she was diagnosed with inoperable colon cancer. She was placed on hospice and died peacefully at Anna House on December 8, 2007, at 7:35 p.m.

A wake/vigil service was held at Anna House and the motherhouse on December 12. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with burial in the motherhouse cemetery. A niece, Marta Silvia from Honduras, and a nephew, Dr. Edgardo Espinal from Florida, were present for the services. She is survived by two sisters: Priscila Gomez and Adriana Avila in Honduras.

A woman of faith and determination, Sister Maria Marta willingly left family and home to answer God's call, journeying into a new country with a new language and culture. She was an excellent seamstress, had a great sense of humor, loved to play cards and cheered for the St. Louis Cardinals. Her ministry to the elderly and poor Mexican-Americans in Fort Madison was very dear to her heart. Freed from pain and suffering, may she now rejoice in the fullness of eternal life with her loving God!