



**Marlene Ann Brownnett, SHCJ**  
August 10, 1934 – September 5, 2024  
Educator, Administrator

Rosemont, Pennsylvania – Marlene Ann Brownnett, SHCJ, a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus for 62 years, died peacefully on Thursday, September 5, 2024. She was 90.

Sister Marlene, born in Jersey City, New Jersey, was a happy, energetic, and intelligent child. As an adult, she was a great storyteller with a gentle spirit and a sweet sense of humor. Loved by many, especially friends and families of Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child in Summit, New Jersey, Sister Marlene was a gifted English teacher who deeply admired the Society's Foundress, Venerable Cornelia Connelly.

Sister Marlene's first connection with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus and Cornelia Connelly came through her friend Bishop Fulton Sheen. Bishop Sheen met the Holy Child Sisters as a young priest during a retreat and quickly became a beloved friend of all the Sisters. He encouraged Sister Marlene to attend Rosemont College, which was founded by the Sisters.



After graduating college in 1956, Sister Marlene worked for three years in the Archdiocese of New York's Propagation of the Faith office. In 1959, she entered the Society and made her first and final vows in 1962 and 1967, respectively. She became well known by her religious name, Mother Mary Magdalen.

Sister Marlene served for nearly four decades in education. Her first assignment was at the Academy of the Holy Child in Suffern, New York. During her nine years at the academy, she was a classroom teacher and an administrator, eventually serving as head of school for two years.

In 1971, Sister Marlene began teaching at Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child in Summit, New Jersey, before being called to Rome, Italy, where she served for four years as the Generalate Secretary. Returning home in 1980, Sister Marlene happily and lovingly resumed her teaching position at Oak Knoll School of the Holy Child. She remained at the school for the next 26 years, teaching English, theology, and public speaking and serving as a member of the school board. During these years, she also served as a board of trustee at Holy Child Academy in Old Westbury, New York, and the School of the Holy Child in Rye, New York.

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In honor of Sister Marlene's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday last month, members of Oak Knoll School traveled to Rosemont. They presented her with a beautiful, heartfelt video of faculty, staff, former students, and friends expressing their gratitude and love to Sister Marlene.

Wherever Sister Marlene traveled and ministered, she shared her admiration for Cornelia's spirit and life. Sister Marlene dedicated significant time advancing Bishop Sheen's cause for beatification and served on the board of directors of the Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Foundation. She also volunteered at a nursing home in New York City.

In 2011, Sister Marlene officially retired and lived in a women religious retirement community in Hartsdale, New York, sharing her joy, zeal, and good humor with the residents and staff. In February 2024, she moved to Holy Child Center in Rosemont, Pennsylvania. Despite her declining health, Sister Marlene's pleasant outlook and sense of humor remained a constant until her death. She will be deeply missed.

Sister Marlene earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from Rosemont College in 1956 and a Master of Arts in English from The Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 1971.

She joins her parents, Joseph and Kathryn (Bastian), and sister Edythe in eternal rest. She is survived by a number of cousins and many dear friends.

Friends and family are invited to a Prayer of Remembrance on Friday, September 13, at 4:00 p.m., and a Mass of Christian Burial on Saturday, September 14, at 11:00 a.m., at Holy Child Chapel, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, Pennsylvania 19010. Preceding Mass, friends and family are welcome to attend the viewing at 10:00 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus – American Province, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, Pennsylvania 19010, or made online at [www.shcj.org/american/donate](http://www.shcj.org/american/donate).