



Helen T. McDonald, SHCJ

Teacher, Administrator, SHCJ Leadership Team Member, and American Province Leader
September 11, 1940 – January 8, 2021

Rosemont, Pennsylvania – Helen T. McDonald, SHCJ, a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus for 57 years, died of breast cancer on Friday, January 8, 2021. She was 80.

Sister Helen was a self-described “extrovert” with a passion for history, reading, writing letters, and current events. She loved being a Holy Child Sister and was grateful to God for all the experiences that came her way. Blessed with a listening heart, intelligence, and a sense of humor, Sister Helen made lifelong friends wherever she traveled and served. She embodied the Holy Child values of joy, zeal, and love.



The only child of John V. and Helen (Mars) McDonald, Sister Helen was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Holy Child Academy, Sharon Hill, where she was taught by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, Sister Helen enrolled in Rosemont College, which was also founded by the Sisters. Her fondness and respect for the Sisters led her to enter the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in 1960. She made her first and final vows in 1963 and 1968, respectively. She became well known by her religious name Sister Vincent de Paul.

Sister Helen’s teaching and education ministry spanned 23 years, beginning at Saint Leonard’s Academy in Philadelphia (1963-1966), Holy Child School at Rosemont (1966-1972), and Saint Edward School in Philadelphia (1972-1975). She served as head of school at Holy Child School at Rosemont for eight years (1975-1983). She then worked at Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac, Maryland, as the recruitment director and history teacher (1984-1986).

For seven years, starting in 1987, Sister Helen worked as a legislative assistant to Congresswoman Connie Morella in Washington, D.C. Sister Helen thoroughly enjoyed this position because it tapped into her interests in meeting and helping people and current events. On hearing of Sister Helen’s passing, Congresswoman Morella commented, “The staff and I loved Sister Helen. She did so much for the congressional office, for the community, for the nation, for all she touched. A local example is how she obtained the funding to build Victory Housing’s St. Bartholomew’s House. She was also a dear, personal friend.”

From 1994-2011, Sister Helen served in Society leadership positions at the international and province level, beginning as an American Province Leadership Team Member in California (1994-1999), Society Leadership Team Member in Rome, Italy (1999-2004), and finally the

American Province Leader (2005-2011). In these roles, Sister Helen loved to meet and serve with the Sisters.

Geraldine MacCarthy, SHCJ, a Holy Child Sister from the European Province and former Society Leader, shared the following about Sister Helen.

I have the happiest memories of Helen McDonald from my time living and working with her on the Society Leadership Team and the many encounters with her in subsequent years. Helen had an exceptional and contagious zest for life, for challenges, for change.

Her appreciation of other peoples' history and culture enhanced her role in Society leadership. She had a great gift for maintaining warm and lifelong relationships, particularly by regular correspondence. Helen entered wholeheartedly into travel, cheerfully accepting challenging situations and any difficulties she encountered. She was highly organized and brilliantly coordinated the Society's Year 2000 mini-assemblies and the transfer of the Cornelian archives from Rome to Oxford.

Helen was a true contemplative in action, finding God in all things and everywhere. I greatly valued her and her counsel, always generously offered.

In 2012, Sister Helen accepted a position at her alma mater, Rosemont College, where she raised funds for the school. In 2015, she started working at the Mission Advancement Office for the American Province. Due to illness and COVID-19 precautions, she stopped working full-time in 2020.

Sister Helen earned a Bachelor of Arts from Rosemont College in 1968 and a Master of Arts in American History from Temple University in 1973.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus – American Province, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, PA 19010, or make a gift online at www.shcj.org/american/donate.