



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PO BOX 100 OLDENBURG, IN 47036
WWW.OLDENBURGFRAUCISCANS.ORG

August 30, 2021

Dear Sisters and Associates, Co-Workers, Family, and Friends,

**“A simple prayerful life. . .
Amen.”**



S. HELEN ECKSTEIN, OSF
FORMERLY ANTONELLA

With these two lines Sister Helen Eckstein ended her autobiography--and probably no few words could provide a better description of her life among us.

Helen was born on March 31, 1940—as she wrote, a “precious birthday present” on her mother’s own birthday. She joined an older brother in her farming family, which was later to welcome one more girl and four more boys.

Helen relates the tragedy that marked her young life: “On February 3, 1953, the feast of St. Blaise, Mother, Father, Howard and Earl went to Mass and the blessing of the throats. After leaving church, they were on their way to Batesville to deliver cream when they were in a train accident. All were killed.” The remaining five children were split up among various aunts and uncles. Helen herself finished school in Enochsburg, went on to Oldenburg Academy, and then “joined the Franciscan Sisters who were her teachers and friends from school days.”

Helen, then Sister Antonella, began her teaching career at Holy Name, Beech Grove, and St. Vincent de Paul, Cincinnati, before moving on to St. Michael, Brookville, where she would spend the next 40 years. She wrote of these years: “My entire ministerial life was spent in teaching. It was fulfilling for me because there was always something new to discover. I liked the variety that came with the increasing use of computers and I volunteered often to take the faculty to the ‘next step.’ My favorite group to teach was the junior high students. Seeing them progress and develop was always a treat.”

When in 2005 it came time for Helen to retire to Oldenburg, her days were active and full. At first she helped in the Associate Office. At times she ran the video camera for Mass and special events; at other times she would sit with a Sister who was dying. Helen belonged to a book club and enjoyed playing in the Chime Choir. Most recently, hers was a familiar face in our Development Office, doing data entry and other computer work. Sue Siefert, Director, noted that “In the beginning, S. Helen was reserved, but Jo Ann Butt and I soon engaged S. Helen in daily chatter, and we’ve all become close friends.” Once, when Helen was able to return to the office after an extended period of recuperation, Sue commented, “Having S. Helen with us again was like having a family member come home.”

Helen passed her spare time reading and completing puzzles. She reported that her very favorite thing to do was to drink a cup of hot coffee and eat a piece of homemade pie baked by her sister Rosella. Having been raised on a farm, Helen loved the outdoors. She could often be seen visiting and out walking with her faithful friend S. Dominica.

Classmates referred to Helen's inquisitive nature, noting her interest in both Community and world events. This was perhaps why she described her trip to Europe as a "favorite memory" in her life. She enjoyed observing how people lived in Rome, Assisi, London, Paris and Switzerland, and learning the background of the various nationalities.

Helen seemed to have a great gift of accepting life as it came. Even during her years of active ministry, she suffered from an inflammatory disease that caused much back pain and stiffness. Due to severe hearing loss in later years, she received cochlear implants. Following this surgery, S. Bernice Roell spent many a session working with Helen on hearing exercises, for Helen was always eager to improve. The two could be heard enjoying a good laugh when Helen shared what she *thought* Bernice had said! Not everyone has Helen's gift of being able to laugh at herself.

Helen surprised us all as she quietly slipped into eternity this morning. We offer our sincere sympathy to her sister Rosella and brother Tony, to her faithful companion and friend S. Dominica, to her classmates Sisters Rose Marie and Agnes, to her development colleagues Sue and Jo Ann, and to her other relatives, friends, and former students. Our gratitude extends to our nursing and pastoral care staff, as well as to the medical personnel who cared for Helen at other facilities recently.

These last years of Helen's life found her experiencing, always with her characteristic calm and acceptance, one medical issue after another. We pray then, in the words that Helen selected for her "Song of Farewell," that:

*"The hand of God shall hold you, the peace of God enfold you. . .
The light that shines to guide you home to the loving hand of God."*

In peaceful remembrance,



Sister Christa Franzer
For the General Council

S. HELEN (Antonella) ECKSTEIN, O.S.F.

Born: March 31, 1940

Entrance into Religious Life: February 03, 1958

Entrance into Eternal Life: August 30, 2021

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. HELEN SERVED:

1960-1963	Holy Name	Beech Grove, IN
1963-1965	St. Vincent de Paul	Cincinnati, OH
1965-2005	St. Michael	Brookville, IN
2005-2006	Associate Office	Oldenburg
2006-2019	Development Office	Oldenburg
2019-Present	Retirement	Oldenburg

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Weigel Funeral Home – visit their website to view Sister's online memorial, and if desired, an online condolence may be left on the site to share with her family and the Franciscan Sisters – www.Weigelfh.com

Memorial Donations in Sister's memory may be given online at www.OldenburgFranciscans.org