



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PO BOX 100 OLDENBURG, IN 47036
WWW.OLDENBURGFRAUCISCANS.ORG
FACEBOOK: FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF OLDENBURG



S. HELEN ECKRICH, OSF

January 6, 2020

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

As we were looking forward to celebrating our Founding Day, S. Helen Eckrich passed quietly from this life to eternal life with her loving God. We can imagine Mother Theresa welcoming her not only because it was our Founding Day, but also because it was Helen's feast day.

Helen was born at home in Wilmington, Delaware, to Matthew and Margaret Eckrich on August 28, 1929. She was the middle child having an older brother and younger brother. Helen was labeled as "very smart" and her older brother was "very popular", while her younger brother was really "the brains of the outfit" as she would say.

It was not until the family moved to Indianapolis in her high school years that Helen attended a Catholic school. She had thoughts about religious life but entering the convent was postponed when she accepted a scholarship to Marian College (now Marian University) where she earned her B.A. in History. There, thanks to the mentoring of Sister Mary Carol Schroeder, she truly recognized her vocation and entered the congregation in 1951. In religious life she was known as Sister Augustine or "Gus."

Following Jesus's command to love one another would sum up Helen's life. She was known for being friendly and a lot of fun not only in community but with students and faculty as well. She had a keen sense of humor and was well-liked.

Beginning as a grade school teacher, she quickly advanced to being a social studies teacher at Seccina High School. Upon earning an M.A. in French, she moved on to Marian College to teach French, but her first love was social studies especially government.

At Marian, she was a good team member with the staff and faculty, doing her part to support programs to help adults obtain degrees. She was also part of the Campus Ministry team. She was a favorite of the students whom she went out of her way to help. She cut hair for the students, especially the men, and saved them a lot of money. But more importantly, she was a good listener and concerned about the needs of individuals. She attended all the home sports games for the men.

After 28 years in the congregation, in 1979, Helen asked to be dispensed from her vows. In 1991, she reentered the congregation and was welcomed back, she said, "as the prodigal son." During her time in formation, she relates that "she prospered under the expert guidance of Sister Janet Born."

Helen went on to be President of Immaculate Conception Academy (now Oldenburg Academy), Director of Ministry Effectiveness for Co-Workers and Director of Human Resources sharing her joyous spirit everywhere.

Following the example of Sister Mary Carol, who began an annual lecture series to “expand the world for the Sisters and those around them,” Helen organized a yearly lecture series on timely topics that called for unity among all God’s people. To gain a better understanding of other religions, speakers were invited from Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Another series looked at the traditions of eight Christian religions: Baptist, Roman Catholic, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodist, Presbyterians, and United Church of Christ. Women’s spirituality was a topic that also broadened the horizons of both Sisters and laity.


In 2001, Helen organized a lecture series for the community’s sesquicentennial celebration. It addressed our role in conveying the Franciscan message in the 21st century. Our lives carry forth the message of God’s love, which Helen believed should be shared with everyone.

Sister Helen was an example of growing intimacy with God, love of our congregation and desire to follow the way that her discernment revealed to her. We thank you, Helen, for sharing the gift of your life with us in so many unique and thought provoking ways and calling us to sing of God’s goodness.

We extend our sympathy to Sister Helen’s sisters-in-law, Rose and Mary Helen, nieces and nephews as well other family members, classmates and friends.

Our thanks to her caregivers and the Sisters serving in Pastoral Care in Saint Clare Hall.

Above all, thankful for this inspiring woman,



S. Annette Grisley
For the General Council

SISTER HELEN (formerly S. Augustine) ECKRICH, OSF

Birth: August 28, 1929
Entrance into Religious Life: September 8, 1951
Reentered: Autumn, 1991
Entrance into Eternal Life: January 6, 2020

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. HELEN SERVED:

1953-1955	St. Anthony, Dayton OH
1955-1962	Seccina High School, Indianapolis IN
1962-1967	Marian College (University) Indianapolis IN
1967-1968	Fordham University, New York NY
1968-1979	Marian College (University) Indianapolis IN
1993-1994	Development Office, Oldenburg IN
1994-1995	Oldenburg Academy, Oldenburg IN
1995-2020	Motherhouse, Oldenburg IN

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.

