

Sister Mary Edith (Daley), CSC (Helen Teresa Daley)

November 12, 1915–January 17, 2020

These memories were lovingly prepared by Sisters Ann Therese Sinclair, CSC, and Karla McKinnie, CSC. They were written by Sister Ann Therese and read by Sister Susan Kintzele, CSC, at the funeral on January 23, 2020.

Helen Teresa Daley was born on November 12, 1915, in Rock Island, Illinois, the daughter of Thomas Francis Daley, a wholesale grocer, and Mary Margaret Eick, a homemaker. Her sister Mary Ann Carmack lives in Rock Island. Her sister Loretta Salsbury and her brother Thomas Daley predeceased her. The family moved to Davenport, Iowa, where Helen grew up. She treasured her family roots and her early days living along the Mississippi River. As a child, with her siblings, she played on the riverbanks and loved their frequent visits to her grandparents' large farm across the river. Sister Mary Edith's family ties remained deep and strong, as throughout her life, she delighted in being with them.

After her graduation from Immaculate Conception Academy in Davenport, Helen worked as a bookkeeper. She soon knew that God's plan was leading her in a different direction. She prepared to travel to Saint Mary's, the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Notre Dame, Indiana, where she entered the novitiate on August 1, 1937. She often talked about her favorite Aunt Edith and how much she loved her beautiful singing voice. She and her family were delighted when Helen received her religious name, Sister Mary Edith. She herself had a gift for music and she went on to study music and English at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, and to receive her master's degree from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For 30 years Sister Mary Edith taught English, music and choral singing in grade schools and high schools across the Midwest. Teaching chorus and working with the students in related activities were always her favorite assignments.

From 1971 to 1974, Sister Edith served as the Midwest secondary regional superior of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. From those years she is dearly remembered as mentoring sisters in rediscovering faith in themselves

and one another. The Catholic bishops in Rome had recently produced a document called "Justice in the World." The bishops declared action on behalf of justice to be a constitutive dimension of the Church's mission in the world. Along with other major superiors, Sister Mary Edith spearheaded the challenge to advance the cause of justice and the liberation of the poor and oppressed via education and concrete action in the Congregation's ministries. She inspired and encouraged sisters to reconsider their ministries in the light of justice. Sister Edith was instrumental, along with the priests and brothers of Holy Cross, in establishing the Justice and Peace Center on Chapin Street in South Bend, Indiana. The center continued for more than a dozen years, attracting religious from other orders for internships, and numerous seminarians and students who learned of global injustices while acting locally with the poor and incarcerated. While in leadership in the Midwest, Sister Mary Edith also used any opportunity to encourage and stimulate topics of conversation among the sisters at Saint Mary's, offering opportunities to broaden horizons in the area of justice and other current topics. She was strong but gentle in spreading her passion for things she believed in.

A well-deserved sabbatical at Regis College in Toronto, Canada, in 1980 stoked her enthusiasm and desire to take her background in education and her zeal for justice in a broader direction.

Sister Edith lived at Saint Joseph High School Convent in South Bend following her sabbatical and ministered as assistant to the director of Development and director of Information Services for three years.

In 1985 Sister Edith and some friends learned of women who had low-paying jobs who could not afford the cost of getting to work, buying a good lunch, and caring for their families. They started helping by teaching some of the women different sewing methods so they could take on more than simple sewing jobs and therefore increase their earnings. The group decided to give lessons in various skills so people could find better jobs. What people learned through these contacts and classes improved the quality and dignity of their lives. Sister Edith, with Father Louis Putz, CSC, and others, developed this simple beginning into the Forever Learning Institute, first in South Bend, and later in Mishawaka. The institute continues to help so many through intellectual stimulation and meaningful activity, a

model for adult educational facilities around the country. Sister Edith was the executive director of the institute until 1992. After resigning as director, Sister Edith continued her active involvement there until she retired to Saint Mary's in 2008.

Sister Edith remained very active at Saint Mary's. In addition to her ministry of prayer, her enthusiasm and advocacy for justice thrived as she stayed involved in many local justice organizations and issues and encouraged others with her persistence. She also continued her passion for education, directing a tutoring program for employees at the motherhouse and their families who were eager to improve their English language skills. Some current employees remember her kindness and appreciate how much this helped them with their work and increased their confidence.

It is no surprise that in 2007 Sister Mary Edith was honored by Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, with a Spirit of Service Award recognizing her life-long advocacy for social justice and her faithful work in responding to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged in South Bend and neighboring communities.

These are a few of the comments made to and about Sister Mary Edith at the time she received the honor, summarized as one long tribute: "You had bold vision and innovative leadership. You took the social justice walk which is never an easy road. You were not afraid to take the bruises, dust yourself off and continue. You are a combination of a truly refined woman who has always been willing to get your hands dirty. You kept your poise while hammering away at injustice or oppression. Your sense of humor never left you—nor your ability to keep all things in balance. You did serious work but did not take yourself too seriously. You were first and foremost a truly faithful Sister of the Holy Cross."

Sister Mary Edith, on January 17, 2020, your long and amazing faithful journey of 104 years carried you gently into the loving arms of God. The many seeds you have scattered and sown continue to grow and thrive. May you rest now in peace.