



Society of the Holy Child Jesus  
AMERICAN PROVINCE

1341 Montgomery Avenue  
Rosemont, Pennsylvania 19010  
610.626.1400 phone / 610.525.2910 fax  
[www.shcj.org/american](http://www.shcj.org/american)

### **Helena Mayer, SHCJ**

March 27, 1931 – October 1, 2026

Educator, Administrator, Pastoral Minister, and Archivist

Rosemont, Pennsylvania – Helena Mayer, SHCJ, a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus for 70 years, died peacefully on Thursday, October 1, 2026. She was 95.

For her 70th Jubilee celebration in June 2026, Sister Helena offered the following reflection on her life:

“Looking back, I am filled with gratitude for every person I have encountered. I believe most people are good, doing the very best they can. This has guided how I try to live: be present in each moment, slow to judge, and honor the dignity of every person as the SHCJ mission calls us to do.”

Sister Helena loved her family and was a proud New Yorker who enjoyed sharing many pleasant memories of her youth. She spoke of living in a wonderful neighborhood, attending great schools taught by the Holy Child Sisters, riding the subway to museums, theaters, and big department stores, and having “very happy summers.”



In 2006, she wrote, “The Hudson River – I love to this day; hearing the foghorns at night, the scent of low tide, the George Washington Bridge, and walking Riverside Drive. I received a wonderful education from the sisters and learned grammar (and math) that today would be considered too advanced for high school.”

After graduation from Saint Walburga Academy in 1949, Sister Helena attended Pratt Business School and then worked at *The New York Times* as the assistant to the science editor for three years. In 1953, “after finding the courage” to leave her loving family and enter religious life, she applied to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She entered in 1954 and made her final vows in 1961. For many years, she was known by her religious name, Mother Mary Kilian.

For more than three decades, Sister Helena served in education as a teacher, head of school, or administrator. She worked at Saint Leonard’s Academy in Philadelphia (1956-61 and 1970-73); Holy Child School at Rosemont, first as a teacher (1961-66) and then head of school (1966-70); and Holy Child Academy in Drexel Hill (1973-74).

In 1973, she was named coordinator of the Holy Child elementary schools, and in 1975, her role expanded to include coordinating both Holy Child elementary and high schools. In 1980, she returned

to her elementary school alma mater, Our Lady of Lourdes in New York City, as the principal, summer camp director, and the parish's financial assistant.

In 1989, Sister Helena joined the parish ministry office of the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, and was the area superior for some Holy Child communities in New Jersey and New York. She then became director of religious education at Our Lady Star of the Sea in Cape May, New Jersey (1996-2000).

In 2000, Sister Helena brought her many gifts to the American Province Archives, where for 13 years she organized, documented, and preserved the history of the Society and the Holy Child Sisters with care and love.

Throughout her active ministry years, Sister Helena served on the boards of Holy Child School at Rosemont, Holy Child Academy in Drexel Hill, and Holy Child Academy in Old Westbury. She also volunteered her time with the retired and aging Holy Child Sisters, including a Sister with failing eyesight, whom Sister Helena faithfully visited to read aloud to. The late Tese Currie, SHCJ, a friend and former community member of Sister Helena, once wrote: "This was typical of Helena's loving and generous spirit."

In 2013, Sister Helena retired from full-time ministry and eventually moved to a retirement community in Paoli, Pennsylvania, with other Holy Child Sisters. There she made many new friends and actively participated in community gatherings. In 2024, Sister Helena moved to Holy Child Center in Rosemont, Pennsylvania, where she brought her gentle spirit, sense of humor, and friendliness to all. She was loved by the Sisters and staff and will be deeply missed.

She earned a Bachelor of Science in science education in 1965 from Fordham University, and a Master of Arts in history and Master of Arts in religious studies from Villanova University in 1970 and 1982, respectively.

She joins in eternal rest her parents, Mary (Sullivan) and John Walter Mayer; her sisters, Patricia Mayer and Eileen Mayer Hengler; and her nephew, John Hengler. She is survived by her nephews, Joseph and Michael Hengler, and her niece, Mary Kilian Fisher.

Sisters, friends, and family are invited to a Prayer of Remembrance on Friday, October 9, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., and a Mass of Christian Burial on Saturday, October 10, 2026, 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 visitation 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 <https://www.shcj.org/american/donate>.