Sister Melinda Keane, SHCJ

Educator, Missionary

April 27, 1931 – August 30, 2015

Rosemont, Pennsylvania – Sister Melinda Keane, SHCJ, who was a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus for 60 years, died of cardiac failure at Holy Child Center in Rosemont, PA, on Sunday, August 30, 2015. She was 84.

Born in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, Sister Melinda was the youngest daughter of Jerome and Annette (Dwyer) Keane. She and her two siblings were raised in a loving family surrounded with music, art, and books. At her request, Sister Melinda enrolled at School of the Holy Child in Suffern, NY, as a boarding student. There she blossomed under the warm, welcoming spirit of the Holy Child Sisters and excelled in her studies and the arts. In 1952, after graduating from Rosemont College in Rosemont, PA, she entered the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She professed her final vows in 1960 and became well known by the religious name Mother Mary St. Jerome.

Sister Melinda taught at Rosemont School of the Holy Child (1955-1957); St. Leonard Academy in Philadelphia, PA (1957-1959); and Rosemont Senior School of the Holy Child (1959-1962). Between 1962 and 1976, she was a professor in the English department at Rosemont College.

Beginning in 1978, Sister Melinda served in several ministries in California, including Cornelia Connelly School of the Holy Child in Anaheim (1977-1978) and Claremont College in Claremont (1978-1980). She returned to the Philadelphia area and served in the Society’s on-going formation program. In 1986, she moved to Houma, LA, and began working in Catholic Social Services’ adult literacy and AIDS programs offering counseling, guidance, and educational services.

In 1992, Sister Melinda and four other Holy Child Sisters pioneered the Society’s first mission in Chad, Africa, where they faced intense temperatures, language barriers, and the AIDS/HIV epidemic. Sister Melinda immediately responded to the communities’ needs by ministering to those infected or dying with AIDS/HIV.

Due to failing vision, Sister Melinda returned to the United States in 1996. She moved to Washington, DC, where she continued to serve in AIDS/HIV ministries for 16 years. At first, she worked with the National Interfaith Network and then successively with two agencies supported by the Episcopal Church. In 2011, Sister moved to Holy Child Center.

Sister Melinda was characterized as a person who always sought to give more; the impact of her ministry is best told in her own words:

 *AIDS is a terrible disease…But coming to know closely people with this disease has been a gift to me. Learning to know and love people I would once have thought unacceptable has enabled me to see God’s face in places where I would never have thought to look.*

Sister Melinda earned an undergraduate degree in English from Rosemont College in 1952, a master’s degree in English from The Catholic University of America in 1962, and a doctorate degree in English from Loyola University Chicago in 1970.

Sister Melinda is survived by one sister, nieces and nephews, and close friends. Family and friends are invited to a prayer service of remembrance on Thursday, September 3, at 4:00 p.m., and to the funeral Mass on Friday, September 4, at 11:00 a.m., at New Sharon Chapel, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, PA. Preceding Mass, friends and family are welcome to visit at 10:00 a.m. Funeral arrangements are being handled by Donohue Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, PA 19010, or [click here](https://www.chi-cash-advance.com/sforms/appeal1098/Contribute.aspx) to make an on-line donation.