



Mary Frances Nevins, SHCJ
August 4, 1937 – July 15, 2023
Teacher, Social Worker, and Justice Advocate

Rosemont, Pennsylvania – Mary Frances Nevins, SHCJ, a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus for 67 years, died peacefully on Saturday, July 15, 2023. She was 85.

Francine Gunther, SHCJ, offered the following about her friend and fellow community member, “Sister Mary Frances was a forward-thinking educator who brought her creativity and expertise to elementary and secondary schools on the East and West Coasts. After many years as a teacher and administrator, Mary Frances became a paralegal and, as a public benefits advocate, brought passion and compassion to those she served for 20 years. Her keen intellect, sharp wit, and melodious laugh were the hallmarks of her personality and a well-lived life.”



Born and raised in New York City, Sister Mary Frances was educated by the Holy Child Sisters at Saint Elizabeth School and Saint Walburga’s Academy. Her love of the Sisters led her to enter the Society of the Holy Child Jesus immediately after high school. She made her first and final vows in 1958 and 1963, respectively. She became well known by her religious name Mother Mary Karen.

Throughout her years of service, Sister Mary Frances’ contributions were extensive and varied, as she eagerly embraced new challenges.

Sister Mary Frances spent her first 10 years of service teaching in the Philadelphia, Pa., area including at Saint James School (1958-59), Holy Spirit School (1959-62), Saint Lucy School (1962-68), and Saint Leonard’s Academy (1966-67 and 1971-73).

With a master’s degree in history from the University of Notre Dame, Sister Mary Frances delivered an innovative social studies curriculum at West Catholic Girls’ High School in Philadelphia (1969-71) and then at Cornelia Connelly High School in Anaheim, Calif. (1978-83).

In 1974, Sister Mary Frances earned a degree in urban planning from Hunter College in New York City. She used her newly acquired skills to support the Society’s American Province planning for the next five years. She then completed a one-year paralegal assignment at Villanova University before beginning a ministry at Montgomery County Legal Aid Services. Her

next stop was Philadelphia Legal Services, where she served as a public benefits advocate for 10 years.

Throughout her religious life, Sister Mary France advocated for justice and peace and served on several Province justice committees.

Sister Mary Frances' background in education and her zeal to serve came together in what she considered her happiest ministry, saying:

“Helping people prepare for their court cases enabled them to stand on their own two feet, perhaps for the first time in their lives. Their joy in discovering their personal dignity and worth warmed my heart. This was the culmination of my years of SHCJ ministry.”

Sister Mary Frances earned a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Villanova University in 1967, a Master of Arts in American History from the University of Notre Dame in 1972, and a Master of Arts from Hunter College in Urban Planning in 1974.

Sister Mary Frances is predeceased by her parents, Thomas and Frances (O'Mahony), and nephew, Thomas Nevins. She is survived by her sister, Eileen Kennedy (Jim), brother, Tom Nevins (Rose Marie), and many nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, and grand-nephews.

Friends and family are invited to a Prayer of Remembrance on Thursday, July 20, 2023, at 4:00 p.m., and a Mass of Christian Burial on Friday, July 21, at 11:00 a.m., at Holy Child Chapel, 1341 Montgomery Avenue, Rosemont, Pa., 19010. Preceding Mass, friends and family are welcome to attend the viewing 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, PA 19010, or made online at www.shcj.org/american/donate.