

Sister Mary Helen McCarthy (Laetitia)



Born: April 23, 1904
Parents: Joseph and Rose (McMahon) McCarthy
Entered from: St. Clement, Chicago, IL
Postulancy: September 8, 1923
Novitiate: August 12, 1924
Profession: August 13, 1926
Died: Friday, September 29, 1995 at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home at 12:30 a.m.

Ministry:

1926 - 28 Cathedral of St. Raymond, Joliet, IL, Grade 1
 1928 - 34 St. Mary High School, Columbus, OH, Freshman, Juniors, Ancient and Medieval History, Modern European History
 1934 - 40 College of St. Francis, Joliet, IL, Dean of Students
 1940 - 41 Catholic University, Washington, D.C., Graduate Study
 1941 - 42 Marybrook Academy, Maumee, OH, High School Subjects, Religion, Civics
 1942 - 57 College of St. Francis, Joliet, IL, Department of History, Sociology, Economics, Political Science
 1957 - 58 Catholic Charities Office, Toledo, OH, Social Work
 1958 - 60 St. Mary High School, Columbus, OH, Freshmen Class, World History, English I
 1960 - 63 St. Francis Academy, Joliet, IL, Freshmen/Sophomore Classes, Ancient and Medieval History, Modern History, English I
 1963 - 65 St. Procopius High School, Chicago, IL, Religion, World History, Civics, YCS (Young Christian Student) Moderator
 1965 - 66 St. Francis de Sales High School, Chicago, IL, U.S. History, Sociology
 1966 - 67 Sacred Heart (Englewood), Chicago, IL, Sociology, World History
 1967 - 69 Sts. Peter and Paul High School, Chicago, IL, Religion II, Sociology
 1969 - 75 St. Francis Convent, Joliet, IL, Tutoring Program
 1975 - 76 St. Mary, Rock Island, IL, Religious Education
 1976 - 82 St. Francis Convent, Joliet, IL, Tutoring Program
 1982 - Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet, IL, Retired

Wake: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Sunday, October 1, 1995
 2-7:00 p.m. with a prayer service at 4:30 p.m.

Mass of Christian Burial: Our Lady of Angels, Joliet, IL, Sunday, October 1, 1995, 7 p.m.
Burial: Monday, October 2, 1995 leaving Our Lady of Angels 9:30 a.m. to Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, IL, S8-L352-G1

Survived by: her brother Daniel and sister-in-law Joan McCarthy (Barrington, IL) and sister-in-law Nina McCarthy (Chicago) and cousins.

*For those who have been faithful, O Lord,
life is not ended, but merely changed.*

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Sister Helen Mary McCarthy was born in Chicago, Illinois on April 23, 1904 to Joseph and Rose McCarthy. She was baptized at Immaculate Conception Church in Chicago. Besides her parents, her family included five brothers and four sisters. Her father owned a construction business. Mother Cabrini often stopped at his shop to request his services for her sisters. One day Mother Cabrini asked young Mary Ellen if she ever wanted to be a Sister. At the time of her Golden Jubilee, Sister Helen Mary recalled that this invitation gave her courage to believe such a life could be possible for her. After completing high school at St. Thomas in Chicago, Mary Ellen took commercial courses at St. Clement's in Chicago. On September 8, 1923, she was one of three young women from that parish to become postulants with the Franciscan Sisters in Joliet. Mary Ellen became Sister Laetitia, and the two other young women were given the names Sister Verdiana and Sister Trinette when they were received into the Novitiate together with their 26 other classmates on August 12, 1924.

After first profession, Sister Helen Mary taught for several years at St. Mary's High School in Columbus, Ohio before coming to the College of St. Francis to serve as Dean of Students. From 1942 to 1957, Sister Laetitia taught Sociology at the College of St. Francis.

Sister Laetitia had been among the first students at Assisi Junior College (later to become the College of St. Francis) beginning classes there in 1923. It was then that she was influenced by such educational giants as Sisters Eulogia, Cecilia, Eucheria, and Faustina. She credits Sister Eulogia as a "great inspiration and an excellent teacher, who made me feel encouraged to prepare for education as my life's work." Sister Laetitia received a bachelor's degree from DePaul University in Chicago in 1928 and a masters degree from Loyola University in 1936. While she was pursuing a second Master's in Sociology at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., she took classes from Father Daniel Lord, S.J., and was inspired to write her thesis on the topic: Social Aspects of the Sodality System.

After a long ministry in full-time education, Sister Helen Mary came to the Motherhouse in 1972 to pursue a desire to write. Her publications are preserved in journals and periodicals in libraries across the country. She also left a collection of unpublished poetry.

Highlights of these years include a pilgrimage to her mother's homeland of County Louth in Ireland, where she visited relatives who have maintained contact with her through these years. Together with Sister Ambrose Didier, Sister Helen Mary continued her trip journeying through the places in Italy that are significant to our Franciscan Heritage. In 1982, Sister Laetitia moved to Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home where she remained until September 29th, the Feast of the Archangels Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel, when Sister Helen Mary went forward quietly to meet her God and all the angels, taking the final step toward the desire she expressed when entering the Convent, "to become a saint."

Sister Helen Mary, we thank you for your long service in higher education and for your creative gifts used in the service of many. We ask that you continue to pray for all educators, for your family and your Franciscan Sisters. As you are reunited to those who went before you, we ask you to pray that many more will be filled with your enthusiasm for God. Amen. Alleluia.

