



Birth
June 10, 1927

Baptism
June 19, 1927

Profession
July 29, 1948

Death
August 19, 2019

Burial
Chatawa Cemetery

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

In Loving Memory

Sister Colleen Hennessey

Audrey Ann Hennessey was born on June 10, 1927 in University City, Missouri, to Alice Elizabeth (Lamb) Hennessey and Thomas James Hennessey. She was the eldest of two children: herself and her brother, Thomas Luke Hennessey.

Audrey Ann attended Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary and Hanley Junior High School in University City, Missouri. Audrey Ann completed her high school education at Rosati Kain in St. Louis in 1945 and entered the Sancta Maria in Ripa, St. Louis, in August of that year. She professed her vows in 1948 and received the name "Collen." For a few years sister went by the religious name of Collen (pronounced Colin). While at St. Gabriel's Sister Collen was visited by Mother Evangela who addressed her as Sister Colleen. She'd say, "Mother, my name is Collen!" Mother said, "It should be Colleen," and she changed it right there on the spot.

After six years at St. Gabriel's school in St. Louis, Sister Colleen was sent south to teach science and geometry at Redemptorist High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After one year of teaching, she was transferred to Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Houston, where she became principal in 1959. This began her 40 plus year ministry in administration.

Sister Colleen became the first archdiocesan supervisor of schools from 1961 through 1967 in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. From there she went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she received her Doctoral degree in 1968. Her dissertation was in multi-cultural education. In 1968, Sister Colleen was appointed administrator/chairperson of the department of education at the University of Dallas. In 1972, Sister Colleen became Superintendent of the Diocese of Galveston and Houston.

Sister Colleen was an innovator of her time. Seeing the need for a guidance consultant to serve schools, she hired a diocesan consultant to assist the schools. Sister Colleen conducted a feasibility study, as early as 1974 for special education needs and hired a School Sister of Notre Dame, Sister Suzanne Pescay to help meet those needs. Together they developed classes in the 60 schools with the concept of integrating the needs of learning disabled children, ADHD, and several other special needs into elementary and secondary schools. She also opened what was eventually called a regional school, by developing the first Catholic school of environmental education at Notre Dame of Dallas. There, city kids could learn that milk came first from the cow, not a carton.

When the school office entered the tech world in 1983, Sister hired the first tech consultant for the schools, Mrs. Mary Lou Cenatiempo. Mary Lou hit the school like lightning and the schools went into the tech world summa cum laude. When the chancery office told sister they were going to conduct a study to see if they should use computers in their schools, she mentioned the kindergarten children were already typing on computers. The diocesan board just looked at her. She recalled one man just laughed, and said, "Sister you are so far ahead of us."

Sister Colleen was also innovative in helping the inner city schools. They had a special place in her heart. She hired diocesan nurses, special educational teachers and librarians

continued

In Loving Memory

Sister Colleen Hennessey

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**School Sisters
of Notre Dame**
Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD
THROUGH EDUCATION

to enrich the often forgotten schools. She helped them consolidate finances, which helped them to survive rather than close.

One of her many accomplishments during her time in ministry was developing the first Catholic school health policy handbook, along with a health consultant and nurses from the schools. She also worked with all the superintendents in developing the process of accreditation for the catholic schools of Texas and assisted in developing the Catholic school state office for accreditation of the Texas Catholic Conference Education Department (TCCED) office. Sister Coroleen Hengsen and Janet Abbachi were the core of the committee that had the process approved by the state. A victory for SSND educators and catholic schools of Texas.

Sister Colleen was acknowledged in many ways with many earthly awards, including being the Irish person of the year in Houston. Going to the Holy Land with the American Jewish Committee of Houston was a highlight of her time in Houston. She was the only woman awarded this due to her response to and her cooperation in Christian Jewish relations in the city of Houston. She developed a curriculum for Catholic schools to study the Jewish faith, their history, and the holocaust. She was proud to go and be baptized in the Jordan just like Jesus.

With all the service Sister Colleen did, she still always believed in a good time. She was always up early on Saturday mornings to pray, eat breakfast and leave by 8 a.m. She'd leave a note for her community, "Gone shopping, see you at noon!" It was her relaxation and exercise. She loved Target, Joske's, Foleys, and Walmart. She also loved road maps and sharing directions. She excelled at it. She delighted in explaining the interstate highway system and giving people a sense in what direction to go.

She also enjoyed adhering to the requirements of getting her driving test every three years. One time, she went for the motorist test for truck drivers. The test administrator was unsure of her abilities to take the test, but Sister Colleen was determined. So, with a step and a lift under the accelerator and brake, she passed the test for driving an 18 wheeler.

Sister Colleen's last Educational ministry was at Saint Michael Special School in New Orleans. Sister worked there three years as the director of the school. Even after her cancer diagnosis, she worked through the chemo and radiation. When she retired from education she served as a Eucharistic minister for the homebound at St. Angela Merici Parish in Metairie, Louisiana. She loved sitting down and having tea and cookies with those confined to home. After six years, she retired to St. Mary of the Pines in Chatawa, Mississippi.

Sister Colleen will always be remember by her sense of humor, her favorite saying, "Honey, Honey of course you can do it," her funny jokes and some shady ones (although not too many). Her life was defined by her love of the congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, her brother Tom, her family, friends, and all people.

Sister Colleen Hennessey died at St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Mississippi around 8:20 a.m. on August 19, 2019. Prayer service and visitation for Sister Colleen was on Friday, August 23 at St. Teresa Church in Chatawa.

Written from the eulogy given By Sister Suzanne Pescay, SSND