



School Sisters
of Notre Dame
Atlantic-Midwest Province

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Sister Helen Kobelsky, SSND (formerly Sister Lucy)
March 9, 1925 – January 31, 2018

Helen was born in Leipzig, Saskatchewan, the fourth youngest of 16 children. Her parents, Ferdinand and Eva (Hiebert) Kobelsky were from Russia. Helen attended a country school where catechism was taught daily. During the summer vacation, instruction was given by our sisters. She was deeply impressed by their piety and dignity. Helen's ambition was to be a nurse. After completing Grade 12 at Notre Dame Convent School, Leipzig, she was too young to enter the school of nursing. Thus, in 1942 she decided to go to Teacher's College. Within a month school inspectors were looking for teachers due to a shortage during World War II. Helen accepted a teaching position. Later, while teaching with SSNDs, she decided to follow her persistent longing to enter Notre Dame Convent in Leipzig, which she did in 1947.

Following her profession of vows in 1950 at the Waterdown motherhouse, she moved back to her home province, Saskatchewan, teaching in Leipzig until 1953. Again in 1957 she returned to Leipzig. Several of her pupils she had taught in the primary grades. From 1960 to 1971 Sister Helen was both principal and teacher in the following schools, St. Joseph, Fergus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Hamilton, Canadian Martyrs, Hamilton, St. Clement, Cambridge, Notre Dame, Kitchener, St. Mary, Owen Sound, and Sacred Heart, Walkerton. Her next teaching assignment was in Edmonton, Alberta.

Sister Helen had teaching certificates from three provinces in Canada, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

In 1966 she completed her Bachelor of Arts Degree from McMaster University, Hamilton. Sister Helen, then, focused her attention on social justice issues. In preparation for this in 1976 she studied at Divine Word Centre, London ON which offered studies in scripture and social analysis. The following year, in 1977, she attained her Masters Degree in mission studies from St. Paul University, Ottawa.

At the invitation of the Bishop of Hamilton, Sister Helen was asked to establish and co-ordinate the Social Awareness Office for the diocese. In a letter dated October 24, 1983, the Most Reverend Paul Reding, congratulated her on receiving a prestigious invitation to a Strategy Session for Peace and Security in a Nuclear Age. "You have worked hard and long to be put in this V.I.P. category . This is precious what I wanted to happen when we established our Social Awareness office."

Between 1980 at 1991, Sister Helen became involved at the grassroots level. She spent time with our sisters in Bolivia and Peru. Also, she participated in a Canadian Development and Peace Program in Mexico and with Salvaide visited Mesa Grande Refugee Camp in Honduras and encouraged refugees in El Salvador to return to their former villages.

On October 21, 1988 Sister Helen was awarded a Certificate of Recognition by the city of Hamilton for her contribution to the Mayor's Race Relations Committee. In November 1992 Sister Helen was presented with the World Citizen Award in the city of Hamilton. This special recognition was for her years of working for the poor and disadvantaged, especially in her efforts toward global understanding and world peace. She was a member of several organizations advocating for social justice and human rights.

In 1984 and 1986 she participated in the International Education Seminar in Rome. "A Way to the Future: Directions for SSND Education," was one tangible result of the common work of the seminar regarding SSND ministry of education.

In 1995 Sister Helen moved to Saskatoon where she was involved in prison ministry and later to Wilkie, before retiring to Notre Dame Convent in 2005.

Sister Helen used her musical talents in various ways. At our Canadian province summer gatherings, she would organize a musical presentation. All the sisters from the St. Joseph Colony area in Saskatchewan were on the stage. The St. Joseph's Colony band and choir performed. Sister Helen played the guitar, or if she didn't have one, she used a broom. Sometimes their performance included costumes -- Helen always wore a funny hat to add to the spirit. She never looked happier, and all were delighted with their entertainment.

Love of nature was close to her heart. She wrote, "the unequalled beauty of sunrises and sunsets speak of God and darkness heralds the star-filled sky. This backdrop of nature in some way parallels the life of the prairie people who remain hardworking and faith-filled."

Sister Helen was predeceased by her siblings. Left to mourn are her many nieces and nephews.

The Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Helen was celebrated on February 5 at Notre Dame Convent. The celebrant of the Mass was the Very Reverend Wayne Lobsinger, Episcopal Vicar for Consecrated Life and concelebrants were the Very Reverend Monsignor Murray Kroetsch, Vicar General and Chancellor of the Diocese of Hamilton, and the Reverend Pablito Labado, Chaplain, who was the homilist. Present in the sanctuary was the Most Reverend Douglas Crosby, OMI, Bishop of the Diocese of Hamilton who offered the Commendation and Farewell Prayers.

Internment will be at St. Pascal's Church Cemetery, Leipzig, Saskatchewan.

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