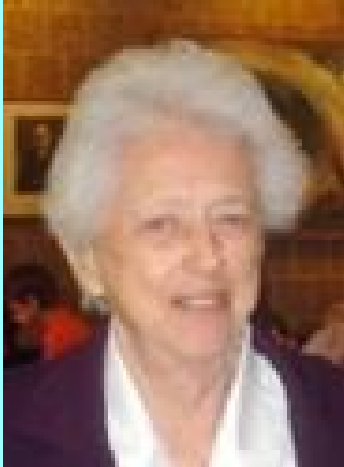




# Sisters Teresita Hinnegan & Margaret McKenna



*Hello to all of our friends, family, and supporters. We're sending this correspondence to you all to share the stories of two of our beloved Sisters. We hope you enjoy!*



When someone told Sister Teresita Hinnegan, age 85 at the time, that it is ok to relax and take it easy after age 80, Sister said, “I wish I had 40 more years...there is so much I want to do!” Sister Teresita, born in 1927, has fought for good health care and justice for women living in poverty all her life. Beginning her ministry with Medical Mission Sisters in Bangladesh as a nurse-midwife and nurse supervisor, Sister Teresita returned to the U.S. and earned her MSW so she could work to change policies that did not provide adequate care for low-income mothers and their babies. Her conviction is that any structures that condone violence against women in its many forms need to be challenged at all levels, be they cultural, educational, political or religious.

Motivated by her deep care for those made poor, Sister Teresita started the Maternity Care Coalition while working as a nurse-midwife in a Philadelphia community health center. A faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania for 20 years, Sister lectured on welfare and the delivery of health care to the poor. In 1994 she established the Nurse-Midwifery Distance Learning Training Program at the university, a Master’s level program designed to recruit, train and retain certified nurse-midwives for needy areas of rural Pennsylvania.

Profoundly concerned about the devastating impact of trafficking on women and girls, Sister co-founded Dawn’s Place in 2007. It remains the only residential and therapeutic safe home in the Delaware Valley for women escaping commercial sexual and labor exploitation. She also opened the Center for the Empowerment of Women in Philadelphia to raise awareness of the many ways women experience violence in our world today.

Sister Teresita has received awards from the American College of Nurse-Midwives, the International Center for Nursing Ethics at Yale University School of Nursing, and an honorary degree of Doctor of Medical Science from Villanova University. Now at age 90, she is beginning to slow down but will never let go of her abiding concern for women.

An artist, theologian, published writer and teacher, Sister Margaret McKenna feels a deep connection to desert spirituality. She also is a well-known peace activist.

Born in Teaneck, New Jersey, in 1930, she earned her doctorate in Scripture and Christian Origins at the University of Pennsylvania, and then lived in a monastery in Israel in the 1960s. Once a month, Sister Margaret would escape to the desert between Jericho and Jerusalem to pray. She reflects, “I fell in love with the desert... its beauty, the absolute solitude of it, the freedom and the closeness to God.”

After returning to the United States, Sister longed to integrate the peaceful solitude she experienced in Israel with her desire to bring healing to a broken world. Her quest led her to settle in a very poor area of Philadelphia in 1989, where approximately 60 % of the houses were vacant. She likens the desolate streets of her neighborhood to the deserts of the Middle East. It is in this urban desert that she founded New Jerusalem Now.

For almost 30 years, New Jerusalem Now has provided help to hundreds of persons with addictions by concentrating on holistic recovery. Sister says that living very simply, with few amenities, provides the residents a refuge from worldly evil, echoing the hermits of old who sought to “recreate life in the image of God.” What makes the program work, says Sister Margaret, is the focus on community. “Recovery is not an individual experience. It is the support of the whole community that makes it successful...that makes it powerful...I see Christ right here all the time.”

On February 10, 2020, Sr. Teresita entered he eternal rest and her impact will continue to be felt for years to come.

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