

Dr. Sr. Helen Vincent, F.M.M.

(Sixth Principal)

Born: 4 August 1931
Education: Ph.D. in Economics
State & Country: Tamilnadu, India
Active Years as Principal: 1978 – May 1990



Sr. Helen Vincent, fmm, entered Stella Maris as a student in the year 1956. She became Asst. Prof. of Economics in the year 1967, and was appointed as Vice-Principal from 1974 to 1978. With her far sightedness and zeal for higher education she steered the College as principal from 1978 and laid the foundation for it to become an **autonomous** Institution. The challenges posed by autonomy had been ably met and borne by the College under her leadership. At the end of 3 years of Autonomy, a process of self-appraisal had been initiated by an Autonomy Review Committee. After a thorough evaluation, the Committee commended the development of the college under autonomy and recommended autonomous status.

In 1984 Sr. Helen was invited to attend an International Conference on Asian Women's Concerns by United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia. On her return, she initiated 'Ujjwala', a forum for women's concerns, in the College and introduced a course in Women's Studies in the Department of Economics, subsequently, with the emphasis on women's empowerment every department has a course in Women's studies, appropriate to the curriculum of the department.

She introduced **new courses**, namely; Botany, Commerce, and Physics. The department of Economics, English and Mathematics were recognised as research departments. In keeping with the FMM's option for the poor, she ensured educational opportunities to young aspirants from less privileged backgrounds and also first generation learners.

Improvement of Infrastructure:

- Successful completion of the construction of a new Academic Building (St. Francis Block) with a grand Auditorium.
- Renovation of the heritage building (Bonaventure Block)
- Grotto of Mother Mary

Positions Held:

- A member of the Senate, University of Madras,
- A member of the Executive Council, Xavier Board, Bangalore.
- A member of the Executive Council of AIACHE.
- She was on the Board of Higher Secondary Examination.
- She was also on the Boards of many other universities and institutions like the Bharathidasan University, Mother Theresa University, Lady Doak College and Loyola College.

Her sincere efforts in the field of higher education was recognized through many awards:

Best Teacher Award 1981-1982 was presented by The Department of Higher Education of state of Tamil Nadu.

- The “Thea Mathias” Award for Best Principal Administrator 1983
- The Lions Club Award for “Best Teacher” 1985
- “The Best Principal Teacher”, Teacher's Day State Award 1986
- President's Medal and Citation, Notre Dame University, U.S.A.,
- State Bank of India Award for service in the field of Women's Education, 1989.
- The Department of Higher Education of state of Tamil Nadu bestowed her with Best Principal Title for the academic year 1988-1989.



The Dr.Sr. Helen Vincent Endowment had been instituted on 24 February 1990 in honour of her 12 years of archetypal leadership as Principal, and 34 years of service in different capacities to the College. She joined the Xavier Board of Christian Higher Education in India as the Secretary from 1991 to 1997.

Sr. Helen fmm returned to Stella Maris in 1997 as Secretary of the College and Superior of the FMM Community. She continued her position as Secretary of the College for two terms till 2010. In 2011 she became the director of “The English Language and Life Skills Programme” which catered to students who aspired to enter into a regular degree programme of the College. This intensive one-year programme prepared students who have finished their schooling in the vernacular medium to face the challenges of main stream college life.

She was also the Archive Advisor of the College till the end of her life and played a significant role in highlighting the administrative and historical importance in the annals of Stellarchives. She had written her autobiography and Stellarchives treasures the manuscript of this great leader who possessed a rare combination of a sharp mind, and a soft heart. She passed away at the age of ninety on 14 December 2020.

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CHENNAI

Sr. Helen Vincent, ex-principal of Stella Maris College, passes away

STAFF REPORTER

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Sr. Helen Vincent

Helen Vincent, former principal of Stella Maris College, died in the city on Monday evening. She was 90.

Sr. Helen belonged to the order of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and studied in Stella Maris. During the term she served as the principal of the college, she has been credited with ushering in several infrastructure and academic developments to the institution. She joined the college as a student in 1956 and later became an assistant professor of economics in 1967. She served as the Vice-Principal of the college from 1974 to 1978. She was instrumental in steering the college towards autonomy during her tenure as the principal. She served as the principal from 1978 to 1990.

Her contributions to the field of higher education had been recognised through several awards, including the best teacher award from the State government, Thea Mathias Award for Best Principal Administrator and the President's Medal and Citation from the Notre Dame University in the U.S.