



Sr. Hildegard Doods - July 13, 1938 – July 11, 2026

Sr. Hildegard, who through her kindness and openness was a true friend to people and to all of God's creation, died peacefully in the early morning hours of July 11, 2026, at Copenhagen-based Bispebjerg Hospital.

Sr. Hildegard was born on July 13, 1938, as the eldest of seven siblings. Her parents, Alois and Maria, named their firstborn Anna. She was born in Südlohn, in the German region of Westphalia, near the border to the Netherlands. There, Anna grew up on her parents' farm, as part of a community characterized by a hard and labor-intensive daily life, where neighborly help, traditions, and the Catholic faith were of great importance. When Anna, after finishing school in 1953, as a 19-year-old

woman, felt called to join the Sisters of St. Joseph in Copenhagen, she was "flanked" by two prominent family members with ties to Denmark. Heinrich Doods, who became a Catholic priest—and was in fact ordained three days before little Anna was born—served in Denmark from 1939 to 1968 in the parishes of Svendborg, Nyborg, and St. Nicholas Church in Esbjerg. Pastor Doods' sister, Sr. Ignatia Doods, was already a Sister of St. Joseph in Denmark when Anna arrived at the Sisters of St. Joseph on Strandvejen in Copenhagen on August 1, 1957.

Her formation with the Sisters of St. Joseph began with her admission to the novitiate on May 1, 1959, when Anna received the religious name Sr. Hildegard.

Sr. Hildegard completed her novitiate by taking her first vows on May 1, 1960. As a young junior sister, she moved to the St. Joseph Institute on Dag Hammarskjölds Alle in Copenhagen, where she served until 1980, with a brief three-year interruption (1968–1971) during which Sr. Hildegard spent furthering her theological and pastoral studies in Germany (Münster and Munich). Sr. Hildegard took her perpetual vows on May 1, 1965.

The 1970s marked a turning point for the Sisters of St. Joseph in Denmark, as the first "small community"—a community not affiliated with an institution—was established in Herlev, at Klokkedybet 20. Sr. Hildegard was one of those who "moved out" (away from the institution). It was viewed almost as a "trial balloon," but it proved to be a great success. The era of large institutions had passed, and the sisters opened more and more small communities.

In 1980, Sr. Hildegard was appointed by Bishop Hans Martensen as the youth consultant for DUK (Denmark's Young Catholics). For five years, Sr. Hildegard helped inspire and develop Catholic youth ministry in the Diocese of Denmark. This period concluded with a sabbatical year in Boston, USA. During these years, Sr. Hildegard was also involved in the formation of young sisters in Denmark.

Once again, 11 years of school work followed, this time at Sankt Ansgars School in Nørrebro, Copenhagen. Sr. Hildegard's catechetical skills were particularly evident during school Masses and in religious education classes. Sr. Hildegard remained in Ringsted when she was elected to be the provincial superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Denmark in 2004. Until 2011, leading the Danish province was her primary responsibility, a role Sr. Hildegard carried out with care and love. The role as leader of the Danish province also entailed a number of international responsibilities.

On August 17, 2019, a farewell celebration was held for the Sisters of St. Joseph in Ringsted, as the community at Teglovnsvej 18 was closing. It pained Sr. Hildegard to have to leave Ringsted. Over the course of 16 years, she had formed close bonds with the parish and the school. However, a new calling awaited her at the St. Joseph senior living community on Strandvejen. As one of the five Sisters of St. Joseph who actively shared daily life with 24 other members of the community, she took on board duties and participated in communal events.

Sr. Hildegard has lived her long religious life as a devoted Christian and sought to serve the entire Church. She has held many positions of trust on various boards. She was appointed by the bishop to serve on the board of St. Birgitta School in Maribo. On the board of the St. Vincent Groups, Sr. Hildegard supported many social projects around the world.

Notably, Sr. Hildegard was actively involved in the parish councils in Herlev and Ringsted, as well as in the executive committee of the pastoral council.

In the parishes where Sr. Hildegard lived, she helped prepare children and young people for First Communion and Confirmation. The “last” parish to benefit from Sr. Hildegard’s presence was St. Therese Parish in Hellerup, where she led Confirmation preparation while living in the senior living community.

Sr. Hildegard had a special ability to “see the other” and to meet people “as they are,” no matter where she was. This filled her life and the lives of others with joy. We will miss Sr. Hildegard as a fellow sister, a fellow Christian, and, not least, as a loving fellow human being.

Sr. Hildegard slowly let go of her life as the sun set. The beautiful sunset, which she could no longer see from her room on the 6th floor of Bispebjerg Hospital, nevertheless became a symbol of her life and death. It was the gentle evening light that gradually faded from view—only to be seen by others.

The desire to “come home” is expressed in the last verse of “Christ’s Pure and Beautiful Soul.” This hymn is a rewriting of the ancient prayer “Anima Christi,” written by Saint Joseph Sister Clara Ramsing (1886–1959). The hymn was one of Sr. Hildegard’s favorites:

“Let me come home to you
and among the host of saints
sing to you a hymn of joy,
that shall last forever!

Thank you for everything!

Sr. Gisela Heitz, July 13, 2026