

Helen Prejean

Doctor of Divinity

Sister Helen Prejean, a nun of the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Joseph, has changed the conversation about the death penalty not only in the United States but throughout the world. In the early 1980s while working to bring social services to the poor in New Orleans, she became the pen pal and later spiritual director of a convicted murderer sentenced to death. This experience led to publication of *Dead Man Walking: An Eye Witness Account of the Death Penalty*. The book became a best seller, was translated into ten languages, and was the basis of a 1996 motion picture which earned Susan Sarandon an Oscar. When Sr. Helen found that flaws embedded in the death penalty system inevitably led to the execution of innocent people, she wrote *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Execution* (2004). That book was the Carolina Summer Reading selection for 2007. Sr. Helen's honors include the Robert M. Holstein 'Faith Doing Justice' Award from the Ignatian Solidarity Network (2013), the World Pacem in Terris Award (1998) and the Pax Christi USA Pope Paul VI Teacher of Peace Award (1996) Sr.