Mary Teresa McGrory was born in the Bronx, N.Y. to parents, Margaret and Philip McGrory, both from County Donegal, Ireland. As she put it in her autobiography, Mary said, “When I made my appearance into this world I did not come alone. I brought with me my twin sister, Helen, who is now Sister Philip Mary, SSND.” The twins were baptized at St. Athanasius.

Mary first thought about religious life in the eighth grade “but upon my entrance into high school, I pushed the idea to the back of my mind for the time being.”

Her high school days were spent at Cathedral High School. During and after her senior year, she worked as a clerk in a bank and then accepted a position at Simplicity Pattern Co. in midtown Manhattan as a typist. She says about that time, “Although I was very happy in the business world, I felt the desire to serve God becoming stronger.”

Mary entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame in September 1957 in Baltimore and professed first vows on July 25, 1959. She ministered as a teacher and librarian in New York and Connecticut for fifty years. During that time she was also served as an office assistant and tutor at St. Saviour High in Brooklyn.

Sister Mary earned her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from Notre Dame of Maryland University in 1970.