



TALLER SAN JOSE

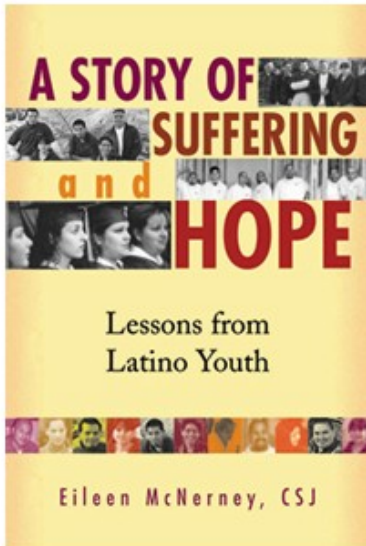
ST. JOSEPH'S WORKSHOP



Executive Biography

SISTER EILEEN MCNERNEY

FOUNDER/PRESIDENT EMERITA



Taller San Jose was founded in 1995 by Sister Eileen McNerney, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange. In 1992, she invited three other nuns to move with her to a gang-ridden neighborhood in Santa Ana, where gun shots and drug sales were commonplace. One hot summer evening, Sister Eileen listened helplessly as a piercing cry rang through the open windows of her busy street; it was the agonizing wail of a mother who had just lost her second son to gang violence.

This moment marked a turning point for Sister Eileen in her resolve to develop a program that could move young people from violence to productivity. By bringing together sponsors representing local government,

churches, corporations, foundations, and private individuals, Sister Eileen opened an educational and job-training center in downtown Santa Ana for high-risk youth ages 18-28. She named the center Taller San Jose—St. Joseph's Workshop—after St. Joseph, the patron saint of workers.

A talented painter, writer, and public speaker, Sister Eileen also authored her own book, *A Story of Suffering and Hope: Lessons from Latino Youth* (Paulist Press, 2005), which chronicles her dogged determination to find what it takes to walk wounded young people out of poverty. "Each young person, no matter what his or her history, is precious in God's sight," says Sister Eileen, "and yet many of them are scared, stuck, or broken. It saddens me to walk down the street and see a bird with a broken wing. I can't always fix the bird, but I do believe that with God's help, the young people who walk through Taller San Jose's door, can one day fly."

Sister Eileen served as Executive Director for 13 years before transitioning to her new role as President Emerita in 2008. She continues to live and work in Santa Ana.

