



Sister Valerie grew up on the east side of Detroit with 10 siblings. Her family was active in her parish and local community. She was taught by Racine Dominican Sisters in elementary school at Assumption Grotto in Detroit and met the IHM Sisters in high school at St. Rose of Lima in Detroit. She “loved the way sisters reached out and cared for others, my parents also, and I wanted to join a group of such caring persons.”

Sister Valerie’s parents were extremely happy with her decision to go to the convent. She had talked about it since eighth grade and joined after she high school. Her first mission was at St. Charles, a country school in Newport, Mich. She was so happy and excited to begin teaching and meet people, and she still keeps in touch with many of her friends from Newport.

Wanting to go to an overseas mission, Sister Valerie went to Puerto Rico after her profession on Pentecost Sunday in 1970. Three years later, the sisters of IHM discerned a call to minister in the poorest region in Latin America. Sister Valerie volunteered to go to Honduras, despite the health and safety warnings. She stayed for 32 years.

Through her ministry in Honduras, she was able to create change and improve the living conditions for the people in the area. “We shared the joys and hopes, the grief’s and anxieties, of the Honduran people,” Sister Valerie recalls. “We stayed to assist in the preparation of Church leaders who were committed to working to better the conditions for all; working with them, groups and individuals from the United States to improve conditions.”

Sister Valerie feels her life has been blessed from the experience of working with the poor. She also saw first-hand the generosity of the community and benefactors, which enabled her to “facilitate change in living conditions and church participation.”

Recalling one particular person who touched her life, Sister Valerie tells a story of a young boy. “Inez had only a fourth-grade education. He was truly committed to the Word and his community of Las Huertas. We sent him to study on the national level and, when he finished, he went to the seminary. Ordained at 42, he is now the parish priest where he began with us!”

Upon returning to the United States, Sister Valerie began ministering in pastoral care to the Hispanic community in Romeo, Mich. She serves as the coordinator of Hispanic Ministry at Agape Center, an outreach center of North Macomb Vicariate Christian Service.

