

IHM Sisters Then & Now – January 2012

Mary Margaret (Mary Gregory) Davis



Sister Mary Davis was the oldest child in a family of six, five girls and one boy. Born in Cleveland, the family moved to Detroit when she was 2 years old. They settled into Christ the King Parish where she attended grade school. In 1953 she graduated from Our Lady of Mercy High School. After two years at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind., she entered the IHM congregation.

In 1960 Sister Mary received her bachelor's degree in chemistry from Marygrove College and in 1969, a master's degree in secondary school administration from Michigan State University. Her teaching assignments were St. Mary of Redford-Detroit, St.

Thomas-Ann Arbor, and St. Mary Academy-Monroe. For seven years she ministered as principal of St. Mary Academy, assistant director of boarding school and director of resident students.

In 1976 Sister Mary took a year sabbatical at the Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., with the CREDO (Continuing Religious Educational Development Opportunities) program. As part of CREDO, students had the opportunity to take a 45-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Walking in the footsteps of Jesus made Scripture come alive for her. An eight-day retreat on the Mount of Beatitudes was included and Sister Mary took the opportunity to sit part-way down the mountain and observe people digging in the biblical city of Capharnaum.

She recalls, "I said to myself that if I ever get back here it will be on an archaeological dig." And it happened! In the summer of 1981 she spent five weeks continuing to dig in Capharnaum, getting ever closer to finding artifacts from the time of Christ. Digging started at 5:30 a.m. and the crew was in bed each night around 8 p.m. Their days were filled with physical labor. She and the others lived in a thatched-roof hut in groups of two, with each group having a bona fide archaeologist who made sure that every item was meticulously marked as to where it was found.

In September she resumed her teaching ministry at IHM High School in Westchester, Ill., and Mother McAuley High School in Chicago,. She was youth minister and adult education coordinator at St. Mary Parish in Downers Grove, Ill.

For the next three years she served as superintendent of education for the Diocese of New Ulm in Minnesota. Five sisters from various religious communities, two priests and the bishop shared life, prayer and ministry "out on the prairie."

"We went cross-country skiing in the winter, could see deer in our back yard, and had a nice garden which provided fresh fruits and vegetables for us," she said. "This was the best communal living experience of my life."

During her ministry in Downer's Grove, Sister Mary became active in peace and justice work. While at New Ulm, she joined the fledgling organization, Witness for Peace, which was taking its first group to Nicaragua to protect the coffee farmers. From 1987 to 1992 she ministered in Nicaragua. Part of this time was during the cultural war, which made life very difficult. She set up a literacy center and library where she taught Spanish and read to children who could not afford to attend school.



For the next eight years she ministered in Chicago at Su Casa, a Catholic group that helped people receive political asylum, legal and medical help, or places to live.

In 2011 she retired to the Motherhouse. Now, Sister Mary visits with sisters in the Health Care Center, takes them outside for fresh air or to ceramics classes. She also rings the Angelus bell each day at 6 p.m., for Sunday Mass, feast days and funerals. She continues to be active with peace and justice as a member of the Monroe Vicariate Peace and Justice Committee.

