2014 Jubilarians
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Oak Jubilarian – 80 Years

Sister Charlotte Walby

Diamond Jubilarians – 75 Years

Sisters:
Cecilia [Hermes] Campbell
Norma [Emerentia] Groth
Paraclita Schnebelt

Platinum Jubilarians – 70 Years

Sisters:
Catherine [Mary Delbert] Broughton
Audrey [Vinciana] Bushell
Patricia [Rosaire] Cassidy
Alys [Gerontia] Currier
Marguerite [Edwarda] Gibbs
Marie Gabriel Hungerman
Antoinette [Jean Clare] McNamara
Marietta Murphy
Mary [Caritas] Naughton
Remi [Mary Remi] Pauwels
Cecilia [Mary Dalene] Schmidt
Janet Sullivan

Diamond Jubilarians – 60 Years

Sisters:
Carolyn [William Mary] Campbell
Jannita [Jannita Marie] Complo
Jane [John Fisher] Farrell
Laura [Laura Mary] Hardage
Shirley [Angela Mary] Houff
Edith Marie Martinke
Mary [Mary Immaculate] McDevitt
Madeleine Sophie Weber

Golden Jubilarians - 50 Years

Sisters:
Lucy Abbey
Gail [John Maureen] Addis
Margaret [Mary Hofbauer] Alandt
Annemarie [Marie Juda] Askwith
Camille Brouillard
Virginia [Marie Amata] Celmer
Judith [John Vincent] Coyle
Mary [Marie Thoma] Downey
Carrine Etheridge
Mary Katherine [Michael Andrew] Hamilton
C. Vita [Vita Marie] Pierce
Gloria Rivera
Margaret [Margarita] Schmidt
Marita-Constance Supan


Jubilarian biographies written by Claudia Cassidy Bennett
Sister Charlotte Walby grew up on a farm in a small village in Ohio. She attended a Catholic school through the eighth grade; there was no Catholic high school in the area, so she stayed home and worked the farm.

During this time, an unrelenting desire for a religious vocation was percolating within her. Her calling felt like “an urgency that I just could not deny. It was like falling in love. The person of Christ became so real to me.”

Sister Charlotte came to her cousin’s reception at the IHM Motherhouse in 1932. The grounds and the newly completed building were works of art. As soon as she walked in and saw a statue of the Blessed Mother in an alcove, she turned to her mother and said, “This is the place!”

Sister Charlotte became acquainted with the postulant mistress and they exchanged letters for a year. During that time, she went to visit relatives in Detroit and stopped at the Motherhouse for a visit. She was measured for the clothes she would need as a postulant; it took her longer than expected to get her clothes made, but finally she entered the community.

Sister Charlotte was not deterred when she entered the convent with women who were older than she was and had more education. She finished high school and then went to college on the Monroe campus. Her first mission was teaching fifth- and sixth-graders in Erie, Mich. She continued to teach for 42 years in seven different dioceses before spending five years caring for her elderly brother.

After a year of renewal, Sister Charlotte ministered at St. Mary Conference Center while also ministering as a chaplain at Mercy Memorial Hospital.

Being a chaplain was a very spiritual experience for her. “To see God working through you, using you, especially for those who are sick, you become God’s hands and voice and manner. That is what is so enriching.” Patients were always eager to see a chaplain. “When I walked into the room, the patient just relaxed.”

For Sister Charlotte, “Vatican II was the most wonderful thing that ever happened. Changes in scheduled prayer time, imposed silence and the regulated dress code were freeing and welcome.” She realized that it didn’t make a difference to her students what she wore; when she first walked into the classroom with the short habit she asked if the students noticed anything different. After several minutes of looking at her, a student replied, “Well, you’re wearing your glasses.”

Her greatest joy in the IHM community has been the Jubilarian celebrations. Sister Charlotte is very grateful for her acceptance by the community and appreciates her education to prepare her to be a teacher. She is grateful for the companionship of the sisters and the services she was able to give to the Church through the community. “I am very grateful for the nursing care I have received when I most needed it. My life as an IHM has been a prayerful journey that is impossible to measure, for which I am eternally grateful.”

“Everything out in the open fields speaks to you of the presence of God.”
It was during high school that Sister Cecilia (Hermes) Campbell began to consider joining and following her sister to the IHM community.

She graduated from high school in 1934 during the Great Depression. Her dad was unemployed; her mother was a homemaker. Sister Cecilia put her desire to join the convent on hold because she did not want to leave her parents in such difficult times. She worked for four years to help support her family until their financial situation improved and then she joined the community with her parents’ blessing.

Sister Cecilia says she “felt God calling me,” and by the time she joined, she knew “God had worked through her and her parents” and she “had peace then to join.” She recalls the strict schedule she had as a postulant.

“We weren’t able to do a lot as far as going places and doing things, but in the summer we would pack a lunch and cross the bridge for a picnic on St. Joseph’s Island.” Sister Cecilia recalls the games they would play and especially enjoyed the baseball games. She also enjoyed walking out to the cemetery and reading the headstones of the sisters. It was one way for the postulants to get to learn the names of the sisters who had died before they got to know them.

Her first mission was at St. Charles (Newport, Mich.), where she taught first and second grades for two years. She taught in many schools in and around Detroit, mostly the elementary grades. She also served as director of the primary grades at St. Mary Academy; as principal of St. John Vianney (Highland Park, Mich.); and assistant administrator at Gesu. In all, she ministered in schools from 1940-2002!

Teaching was a joy. “I delighted in teaching the children. I loved working with them,” she says. While teaching at St. Anne (Warren, Mich.), Sister Cecilia fondly remembers for the first time First Communion was celebrated in the Barn Church. The 85 children had to walk a mile from the school to the church, and she was concerned about the safety. Her students listened to her directions and she was so proud of their behavior during that walk.

Sister Cecilia laughs as she recalls the changes in the habit after Vatican II. The first day she taught without wearing her veil, she said, “I felt naked. It felt like something was missing.” The change “was so drastic. It was kind of hard to get used to.” Sister Cecilia says the changes with the habit did not change the way she taught, but the children had to get used to the sisters’ new look.

Sister Cecilia loves living within the IHM community, having a relationship with the other sisters and sharing experiences with them. Her greatest joy though has been the opportunity to deepen her relationship with God. That, she says was the purpose for her coming to the community. “It was just part of what was inside of me.”

“I could see God working.”
Sister Norma (Emerentia) Groth grew up on the east side of Detroit. The family lived near the convent of Our Lady of Good Counsel School, which was newly opened by IHM Sisters. She attended Nativity High School, staffed by the Racine Dominican Sisters, and the emphasis of her course work was learning secretarial skills.

After high school, Sister Norma spent time working in the office at Our Lady of Good Counsel with the IHM Sisters. During this time, she decided to enter the IHM community. “The sisters had their eyes on me. It all kind of happened very fast,” she recalls.

The sisters at Our Lady of Good Counsel helped Sister Norma prepare to enter the community. She left her home and drove to Monroe with the sisters who were returning to the Motherhouse for the summer. She had the support of her parents, (even though her mother could have used her help raising her younger siblings).

Once Sister Norma arrived at the Motherhouse she says, “It just felt like a good fit.” It was summertime and all the other young women were starting to arrive as well; there was great excitement in the air. She arrived in time for supper and was struck by the routine of everyone washing their own dishes at the dinner table after they were done eating. During her postulancy, Sister Norma enjoyed having Father Marin read scripture every Friday. “He kept tabs on us,” she says with a laugh.

Sister Norma was an elementary school teacher for 33 years, ministering throughout Detroit, including at Holy Redeemer and Christ the King. She also taught in schools in Jackson, Battle Creek, Ann Arbor, Birmingham and Warren, Mich.

“Sister Margaret (Benedicta) Brennan asked me to consider going back to school to become a nurse for the IHM Sisters in our Health Care Center,” she says. “I became an LPN and served in the IHM Infirmary for five or six years.” This was one of Sister Norma’s favorite ministries; she enjoyed caring for and learning from the older sisters. “They told very interesting stories! The experience caused me to reflect on my own life. I asked to attend a clinical pastoral education (CPE) program.”

While working as a nurse at Mercy Medical Center in Springfield, Ohio, she earned her CPE certification and joined the pastoral care staff. She lived with the Mercy Sisters during that time. “They had a house near the hospital and it was such a good time to live there with those sisters. That was a real fond ministry.”

Sister Norma considers Vatican II to be “heaven-sent.” She particularly enjoyed getting rid of the habit and being able to make her own schedule. She is most grateful for all the years of teaching she enjoyed and is also grateful for the variety of professions she experienced; Sister Norma always enjoyed the people she ministered with and to.
Sister Paraclita Schnebelt grew up with an identical twin sister; their father had difficulty telling them apart! Her father owned a bakery in Dexter, Mich., and the girls worked there when they were teens. Sister Paraclita learned to decorate birthday and wedding cakes from watching her father and credits her parents for a wonderful Catholic upbringing.

When she was a junior in high school, her twin contracted tuberculosis. She was quarantined and lived in a sanatorium until she died at age 24. By that time, Sister Paraclita had joined the IHM community. “We were very different,” she says. “She was going to have 12 children and had names for each of them. And I was the opposite. I wanted an education.”

When Sister Paraclita graduated from high school, she had scholarships to attend Marygrove College and the University of Michigan. She chose Marygrove because of her excellent IHM teachers in grade school. While she was at Marygrove, she decided to join the community. She was drawn to the IHMs because “they were good teachers and they were very educated.”

Sister Paraclita recalls a time when the men of a particular parish questioned the sisters’ education. She put an announcement in the parish Sunday bulletin, which silenced the critics; 13 of the 15 sisters in the convent had their master’s degrees and the other two were going to finish that summer. Deeds such as this have marked her time with the community.

Sister Paraclita taught at St. Joseph in Monroe and St. Mary Academy, as well as in eight different high schools. “I had more fun teaching boys because they would confront you and they want the answers to things,” she says.

Sister Paraclita attended Marquette University for her master’s degree in guidance and counseling. When she returned, she became a full-time high school counselor. She enjoyed researching colleges and universities for her junior and senior students. Additionally, her brothers, who had been in the Navy, gave her an insight into what the armed forces could offer her students.

Thinking about the changes the community has experienced over the years, Sister Paraclita fondly recalls Vatican II. “It gave people more say. You have to remember, people are better educated today than they were.”

Sister Paraclita continues to feels well and credits her longevity to the healthy diet her parents made her eat when she was a child and that she has maintained throughout her life. She is grateful for all her experiences since joining the community. “It’s been a wonderful life. I love being a sister. I loved being a teacher. I loved being a counselor. I’m very grateful for the education the community has given me.”

She also appreciates the many opportunities she has had to read scripture and her close relationship with God, a friendship that is very apparent when she tells of occasionally asking God when it will be her time to die. She reports that God says, “Shut up Paraclita!”
Sister Catherine (Mary Delbert) Broughton came to the IHM community in 1943 right after graduating from high school. Her mother's cousins, Dominican Sisters, inspired her to consider becoming a vowed religious, however, IHM Sisters had taught her at St. Patrick in Wyandotte. She admired her teachers and liked the habits they wore.

Sister Catherine “just wanted to be a nun and a teacher.” Growing up in a devote Catholic family with parents who went to church every day instilled a deep devotion to their faith in her, her sister and two brothers. She says she was “just drawn to the lifestyle” of a sister. She chuckles as she reflects back on the reaction of her family when she told them she wanted to join the convent.

“Everybody laughed because I was a tomboy. My grandmother said they would never keep me. But my mother and dad were 100 percent with me.” Sister Catherine enjoyed the rules during her novitiate. “It's what I wanted. You just have to go with the flow,” she says.

Sister Catherine's first mission was at St. Michael in Flint, Mich., where she taught 53 first-graders, but had only 50 desks. She persevered with an organized schedule that incorporated the use of chairs. She then taught in Coldwater, Marshall and Detroit. She returned to her old school, St. Patrick in Wyandotte, where she helped close the school and consolidate it with another.

Over the years, she taught every grade except second. She says she loved them all. “It was more exciting in high school, but I loved the little ones.” She also spent four years in the kitchen at the Motherhouse. She expected to cook but became the baker.

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Sister Catherine always loved sports growing up and she said it came in handy. “We had physical education for the kids, so I did the sixth, seventh and eighth grade girls phys ed classes at various schools. I also coached softball and basketball.”

Some men once challenged her coaching skills, however, her winning season shut down their complaints. She served as a referee for a high school girls’ basketball league as well.

“I've had a lot of children,” she notes. “I started babysitting in the fifth grade and ended at the age of 75.” She had the privilege of babysitting her grandniece and grandnephew for four years.

Being a nun has been Sister Catherine's greatest joy.

“I made up my mind that this is what I was going to do and this is what I will do, God willing.”

“I just go with the flow; it’s easier to go over the bumps.”
Sister Audrey (Vinciana) Bushell got to know the IHM Sisters while she attended St. Rose Elementary and High Schools in Detroit.

She told her brother, Pat, the day before he was to leave for the Air Force that she planned to join the IHM community. “The news had not been out as yet,” she says. Her brother told her he’d pay her a quarter a week if she stayed.

When Sister Audrey celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 1994, “I was presented with the check for $4,269.37 – 51 years at 25 cents a week with six percent [interest] compounded annually.” Pat told her the check was from the “Jimmy and Tammy Bakker Savings and Loan Association of South Carolina; given the Bakkers’ bankruptcy, the check could not be cashed.”

Luckily, Sister Audrey had other rewards.

She began her lifelong ministry of teaching not long after her reception as an IHM, a ministry that spanned 49 years. She spent most of those years teaching in Michigan, although she also served in Chicago, first teaching seventh and eighth grade at St. Felicitas and then teaching seventh and eighth grades – while also serving as principal – at St. Rene.

After 10 years in Chicago, Sister Audrey returned to Michigan to teach junior high school in Monroe, Detroit and Wyandotte. She made the switch to high school in 1970 when she began ministering at St. Mary of Redford, teaching religion, art and clothing. This was followed by 15 years at Brother Rice High School in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., teaching art and ministering in the language lab.

One of her students from Rice described Sister Audrey as, “an excellent role model ... a person of lasting impact on all who came into contact with her.” He went on to say, “She taught me to care for people ... to act positively all the time because a negative attitude toward another person could bring that person down so that neither of us would be living up to our potential.”

It’s no wonder then that Sister Audrey was honored as “Teacher of the Year” by the Catholic Association of Secondary Administrators or that she received the Edmund Ignatius Rice Medallion, an honor bestowed on distinguished educators by the Christian Brothers of the Western American Province.

When Sister Audrey retired at the end of the 1992-93 school year, Brother Rice News Notes reported that “Sister’s talents and experience have contributed immeasurably to the art program ... Our students will probably best remember her with the humorous sign that has hung in the art room for so many years: ‘Clean up your mess, I’m not your mother!’”

Following her “retirement” Sister Audrey worked in the IHM Archives, first as a staff member and then as a volunteer. She quotes the prophet, Jeremiah in her Book of Life page, “The Loving One says, ‘When you call me, I will listen to you. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart you will find me with you.’”
Sister Patricia (Rosaire) Cassidy was born in Detroit, the ninth child in her family. Three of her siblings died in infancy. During the Great Depression, her mother died; Sister Pat was only 6 years old.

“It’s amazing how Dad managed during this trying time,” she reflects. “He was a peaceful man with a kindly nature and a fantastic sense of humor, which helped him cope with the rough times. My two sisters and three brothers were sources of great love and support.”

Sister Pat was taught by the Dominican Sisters at St. Theresa Elementary School in Detroit. Her father remarried in 1943, and when Sister Pat finished eighth grade, the family moved to her stepmother’s home in Gesu Parish. “As there was no high school nearby, in the fall, I was enrolled in St. Mary Academy, where I received an excellent education.

“Although I’m sure my aunt, Sister Margaret Alice Cassidy, IHM, was praying for me, and some of my teachers too, thoughts of a religious vocation didn’t surface until my junior or senior year in high school.”

She joined the IHM community shortly after graduation, and at reception, received the name Sister Rosaire, in honor of a beloved high school teacher who died during Sister Pat’s senior year. As a postulant and novice her “closeness to God grew.”

Sister Pat earned a bachelor’s degree from Marygrove College and a master’s degree in art education from Wayne State University. She remembers sketching on a street corner by Wayne State in her long habit and feeling like she belonged in the Historical Museum!

For almost 50 years, she ministered in Catholic education in many Michigan schools and also spent eight years teaching at St. Felicitas in Chicago.

Although she taught most of the standard subjects, she especially enjoyed teaching art and creative writing.

Even 50 or 60 years later, she is still in touch with some of her former students. Sister Pat fondly recalls one of her former Holy Redeemer students who had a great physical challenge. From him, she learned acceptance and courage and says, “He taught me more than I probably ever taught him.”

Her art skills came in handy for coming up with creative designs for bulletin boards, and Sister Pat often swapped sewing chores with some of the other sisters in exchange for decorating their classrooms’ bulletin boards. This worked out well following Vatican II when alterations were needed as many of the sisters changed out of the long habits!

Sister Pat is an avid writer (especially letters) and considers her “ministry of the pen” to be a vital part of who she is. Her article titled, “Down to Earth with the Saints,” was published in an early religious journal.

“God has been so lavish in blessings!” Sister Pat notes. “The promised ‘hundredfold’ has surely grown to a million-fold! Life, family, vocation, IHM community, students, friends are the precious treasures for which I thank God with all my heart!”

“Anyone is a disguise for God.”

William J. O’Malley, SJ
Sister Alys (Gerontia) Currier grew up in Battle Creek, Mich. She attended St. Philip School where the IHM Sisters taught her.

During her senior year of high school, the sisters began to talk to her about joining the community. She felt drawn toward religious life, but she was considering the Carmelite Sisters. Although she’s social, she likes solitude and is content with being alone, and she felt that “they seemed to suit my personality.” With her mother’s support though, Sister Alys joined the IHM community. The instant she walked into the Motherhouse, the deep sense of peace she felt told her she was in the right place.

Sister Alys laughs as she recalls the challenges encountered during her formation.

“You ask yourself why you did it, and you spend your life wondering how you ever got through it,” she says. “But God works in the depths of you. Things out there can support it or destroy it, but it comes from your depths.”

Sister Alys’s commitment is about faith. She describes it as, “the actions that come out of the deepest part of you. Faith is not that you just accept everything. It’s something that has to grow in you; that you have to question and challenge in yourself.” Sometimes, she notes, “you make a mess of it, and the only way to get through the mess is to be humble.”

Sister Alys started teaching her second year of novitiate at St. John in Monroe. Having no formal training, she got through it by “speaking softly. They kept quiet to see what I was saying.”

Through the years, she taught at other schools in Michigan: Holy Redeemer and St. Agnes in Detroit; St. Charles in Coldwater; Sacred Heart in Auburn Hills; St. John Vianney in Highland Park; and Holy Name in Birmingham.

She studied for a master’s degree in religious education but was unable to complete it because she was asked to be the director of religious education at St. Bede in Southfield, Mich., followed by serving as the director of religious education at St. Colman in Farmington Hills, Mich.

During that time, she attended classes to learn about Vatican II. She became certified as a director of religious education and experienced the difference between teaching adults and teaching children. “The adults and I grew together; many became good friends. It was a very fruitful time in my life.”

She took a year of renewal at Notre Dame participating in a leadership program and then Sister Alys served as a pastoral associate at St. Malachy in Sterling Heights, Mich., where she enjoyed the variety and working with people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Sister Alys’ greatest joy since joining the community is being “given the opportunity for various ministries, which enabled me to share life with many wonderful people.”

Currently, she visits the sick, works in the Alphonsus Ligouri Library at the Motherhouse, gardens and sits on a number of Motherhouse committees.
When Sister Marguerite (Edwarda) Gibbs was 3 years old, her mother died. She and her brother and sister were raised by their father, with the help of a widow the children called “Aunt Belle.”

Sister Marguerite attended St. Michael High School in Flint, Mich., where she fell in love with her teachers. She lived the typical life of a student, enjoying dances and parties, but she knew she wanted to join the IHM community; she wanted a relationship that would last forever. She liked the lifestyle, the teaching and everything being a part of the community had to offer; however, her father was not happy with the idea. He felt the lifestyle of a nun was not compatible with her outgoing personality, but he didn’t object the second time she asked him.

Her first mission was at St. Catherine (Detroit) where she taught first grade for five years, with more than 60 students in her classroom each year. Sister Marguerite loved her students’ innocence and sweet faces. She taught first grade at St. Martin (Detroit); first and second grade at St. Mary’s Academy; and first grade at St. Francis de Sales (Detroit) and St. Thomas (Ann Arbor, Mich.). At St. Timothy (Trenton, Mich.), she taught sixth grade and ministered as teacher and principal at St. Charles (Coldwater, Mich.).

The changes from Vatican II occurred while Sister Marguerite was at St. Timothy. She recalls the day she wore the short habit for the first time. The bell rang and she walked into the classroom, shut the door, and a boy whistled. She laughed thinking, “Well, I must not look so bad.”

Later on, when teaching in Tyler, Texas, she encountered a principal who thought differently about children and their environment in the classroom. Sister Marguerite was fired at Thanksgiving, but moved to Pensacola, Fla., where she successfully taught the Workshop Way with children and teachers for 31 years.

She fondly recalls working with one young student who hadn’t learned to read in kindergarten. The children’s first reader was on posters and placed on the wall for all to read. After saying the words with Sister Marguerite, the little girl told her mom that she had learned to read the first day of school!

Since she retired and moved back to the Motherhouse, Sister Marguerite has enjoyed sewing for others. “I hope I have many more years to continue doing what I’ve been doing,” she says. Her greatest joy though has been “the tremendous people who are here. I have been so enriched by them.”

“Everybody is smart. We just learn at different speeds.”

“Workshop Way” teaching method from Sister Grace H. Pilon, SBS. This program affected her way of teaching children and helped her when teachers came to her with problems in school.
Sister Marie Gabriel Hungerman had IHM Sisters as teachers throughout her 12 years at St. Agnes in Detroit.

She didn’t think about a religious vocation until she was a senior in high school, when one of her teachers suggested it. “I really resisted the idea,” says Sister Gabe. “I thought of a lot of other things I’d like to do.”

Sister Gabe considered herself to be a devout Catholic but was not enamored with being a religious. She joined the IHMs right after high school because of a calling. “It isn’t a feeling ... it just keeps coming back and back to you. You think if God wants me to do this, I’ve got to consider it.”

While in formation, Sister Gabe recalls a time she and her classmates were picking berries when the silence bell rang. “So here we are, all in silence, in our rubbers and aprons and sweaty, marching on the road toward home. I had such a remarkable sense of unity. I felt we were all in this together.”

As a novice, and with only a day’s notice, Sister Gabe was sent to St. Gregory in Detroit to teach second grade. She taught second grade again at Gesu and then went to Holy Redeemer to teach fifth grade. By this time she had fallen in love with teaching.

She taught sixth grade at St. Mary in Monroe while taking philosophy classes in the evening. She had a summer of study at St. Louis University and came home “intellectually intoxicated;” she was sent to continue her coursework to pursue a doctorate in philosophy.

Sister Gabe enjoyed teaching young women and men for 12 years at Marygrove College and four years at Sienna Heights College in Adrian,

Mich. In 1976, she was elected to the IHM Central Administration where she served as first assistant for six years.

At the end of her six-year term, Sister Gabe taught at Nazareth College. While at Nazareth, she also presented workshops for a program to teach philosophy to children. Following a sabbatical year in Hawaii, she ministered at Nazareth for its final year and then taught at Western Michigan University. This was followed by part-time ministry with the IHM Theology Project while also caring for her aging mother who lived on the health care unit at the Motherhouse.

Sister Gabe served as the Congregational Library director for 13 years. Now retired, she is on the Monroe Community Foundation Board and is the chair of the IHM Health Care Ethics Committee. She volunteers in the library.

She notes, “The community has given us so many opportunities for growth, both spiritual and intellectual. I am filled with gratitude.”

“My view of being a community member is I am present in everything as much as I can be and I participate to the fullest.”
Sister JoAnn (Thomas Ann) McAnoy was inspired by the kindness of her sixth-grade teacher, Sister Anthonita, IHM, and was charmed by the respect she showed her students.

She entered the IHM community July 2, 1943; her dad was convinced that her parents would get a call July 3 to come and get her. That would have been dandy for Sister JoAnn’s parents, but no such call ever came.

She was determined to make her vows, but that almost changed when she and a few classmates climbed over the grotto one day. After being reprimanded by the novice mistress, Sister JoAnn apologized and stuck to the rules more closely. (They didn’t know there was a rule about climbing over the grotto.)

She began her teaching ministry at SS. Peter and Paul in Iona, Mich. It was a time of learning and fun because of the joy in the convent. Mother Marie Collette encouraged the sisters to enjoy themselves sliding on cardboard down the giant hill outside the convent. She even bought a sled one Christmas so the sliding would be faster and easier for the young sisters.

Sister JoAnn went to St. Mary in Mt. Morris, Mich., and then to St. Matthew in Detroit. It was a special time in the Church because of the Second Vatican Council. She was in charge of the altar boys, and the changes in liturgy resulting from the Council were a challenge to both the teacher and the boys!

She was missioned to St. John in Monroe and then to the newly opened all-girls Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) High School in Westchester, Ill. While IHM was being built, the girls were taught at the all-boys St. Joseph School. She still laughs about putting paper over the windows and doors so the boys couldn’t look in and the girls couldn’t look out.

After IHM, Sister JoAnn went to Star of the Sea High School in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich. The Vietnam War was being waged, and she encouraged her students to speak out against it. While there, she formed a group of laity and religious who dealt with the changes brought on by Vatican II. She was elected assistant provincial of the Northeast Province; developed and ran anti-racism workshops; and established a Center for Justice and Peace at the Immaculata Convent. She then went to St. Martin de Porres High School in Detroit, where her brother, Rev. Thomas McAnoy, was principal. She taught there for four years before becoming principal herself for five years.

Sister JoAnn went on to teach at Marygrove College for 13 years in a remedial math program that she developed. During her years at Marygrove, she also took care of her brother and sister, who were both not well. At the same time, she also ran a very successful Bingo program to help out her brother’s parish, Our Lady of the Rosary. Sister JoAnn has had a rich and varied life. She is now retired and volunteers whenever she can.
Sister Marjorie (Ann Gregory) McFarland's mother, a professional teacher, and her uncle, an artist, were great influences in her life. Her mother was able to answer any questions she had, which Sister Marge says “moved me toward the field of education.” And on Saturdays while she was growing up, her uncle gave her art lessons.

With the influence of the IHM Sisters who taught her and the friends who joined the community, Sister Marge says it felt natural to become an IHM. She “was drawn to the idealism of God and spirituality of the community. The idealism was also working with people.”

Her IHM role models influenced Sister Marge’s spiritually. “Their depth of knowledge was a very big part of it.” Reflecting now as a mature woman, Sister Marge has no regrets about her choice to join the community versus marriage and having children. “I had children,” she laughs, “just not the conventional way.”

Sister Marge was the oldest of four (her sister joined the IHMs later; one brother died and one brother married and had a family), and her decision to join the community initially broke her mother’s heart. “My sister told me that for the first six months I was gone our mother put a towel on the pillow before she went to bed because she was crying.” The limited visitation that was allowed was difficult for her family.

Initially reluctant to make her vows, Sister Marge confessed her concerns to Mother Teresa McGivney. Mother Teresa’s grace and kindness assured her that the community wanted her. “It was Mother Teresa’s welcoming me that made me think, ‘well maybe that’s what God wants.’ Mother Teresa put her hand out to me. I can remember shaking it; I had a changed feeling at that moment.”

Mother Teresa’s gesture demonstrated the spirit of the community and provided the opportunity for Sister Marge to make her vows with great peace, and she enjoyed a long career teaching junior high and high school. After studying at many universities around the world and completing advanced degrees, she ministered in pastoral care.

She enjoys the camaraderie of the IHM community and being with fun and interesting people. She has a great sense of humor, which was invaluable during her travels. Sister Marge received a grant to study in Greece and was in Athens when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. She and several of her friends looked up and saw the moon and the Acropolis at the same time. It was a moving experience to be in the heart of western civilization at the time of this monumental event. She continued taking classes in French and Latin in Dijon, France, and in other European cities.

Being part of a community, surrounded by outstanding people who have principles she admires, has been one of Sister Marge’s greatest joy. She has enjoyed the influence of very powerful women in her life and appreciates the interesting life she has had since she joined the community.

“Nothing is sure until it is sure.”
Sister Antoinette (Jean Clare) McNamara joined the IHM community after having been introduced to an IHM Sister by a friend. She grew up in Chicago with her three younger sisters and had been taught by another order of sisters. After graduating from high school, she joined the community when the IHM Sisters in her area went to the Motherhouse in Monroe for the summer. She recalls being a part of a wonderful class during her novitiate years and remembers picking berries and string beans at the community’s farms. “Strawberries were the worst because you had to get down on your knees. We picked boxes and boxes of them,” she notes.

Sister Antoinette’s first mission was at St. Agnes in Detroit, where she taught first- and second-graders. She then went on to teach at Our Lady of Help and Gesu, both in Detroit. She spent three years teaching at St. Michael the Archangel in Miami before returning to Michigan to teach at St. Mary in Mt. Clemens.

There was a fire at St. Mary School while she was there. “The church caught on fire when the workmen were using a blow torch,” she recalls. “The next thing the fire alarm went off.”

Sister Antoinette said she and the children had to stand outside for quite a while. Following the fire, classes moved to Dickerson School while repairs were underway, and the sisters had to move out of their convent and live at another convent nearby.

After teaching in Mount Clemens, Sister Antoinette taught at St. Boniface and Our Lady of Good Counsel in Detroit before moving on to teach high school in Chicago. She earned her master’s degree in library science from Dominican University and became a librarian at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill. She also served as librarian at St. Mark in Cleveland and served as secretary at the Ministry Resource Center in Chicago and St. Mary Conference Center in Monroe. Once she retired, Sister Antoinette volunteered in the library at the Motherhouse.

She embraced the changes brought on by Vatican II and liked that Vatican II afforded her the opportunity to be closer with people and grow in her faith. Her greatest joy since joining the community is “being with people and the whole group. We always have a lot of fun together.” Sister Antoinette is happy to have her younger sister as a member of the community.
Sister Marietta Murphy grew up in Buffalo, N.Y., until her parents passed away shortly after she turned 14 years old.

As a result of her parents’ death, Sister Marietta came to Detroit to live with her Aunt Dora and Uncle Joe; her three siblings lived with other relatives. During her time in Detroit, Sister Marietta went to St. Catherine School and was taught by IHM Sisters. She says, “I always wanted to be a sister. When I was a little girl in school I used to play school and put on the habit.”

Sister Marietta had loved the Mercy Sisters who had taught her in grade school, and in eighth grade she proclaimed her desire to become a sister during a vocation day. She recalls a poem she wrote for her eighth-grade graduation. “Finished at last, got my diploma. For a wonder I passed. Commencement all over, class colors unfurled, and here I am a graduate launched on the world. Someday, Sisters of Mercy, I may be one of you.”

She did not become a Sister of Mercy because she fell in love with the IHM Sisters and she liked their blue habits. Sister Marietta joined the IHM community right after high school but left after six months; it was not the right time for her. After returning home, she went to secretarial school. She lived at home during this time and felt she grew up and realized what she wanted to do. She returned to the congregation about a year later.

Her first mission was at St. Joseph in Dexter, Mich. After five years, Sister Marietta taught at St. Peter Claver in Mobile, Ala., and then taught at the Hall of the Divine Child. She also taught at St. Gregory and St. Francis de Sales in Detroit and ministered as principal, first at St. Mary, Mt. Morris, Mich., and then at Holy Name in Birmingham, Mich., before teaching American history at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill. Sister Marietta earned her master’s degree and then served as rector at Badin Hall at Notre Dame University. She ministered within the IHM Development office as director and assistant director and as a Development volunteer following her retirement.

Sister Marietta’s greatest joy since joining the community is having the opportunity to serve the Church and “just being an IHM Sister.” She also appreciates “having had the privilege to teach so many children.”
Sister Mary (Caritas) Naughton was born in Detroit. She was the first of three children; Jack and Kathleen followed. Her parents, Jack Naughton and Katie Murphy, grew up in Ireland and came to the United States as adults.

Her father made his living building houses during the auto industry boom in Detroit. Later he was hired by the University of Detroit in the maintenance department. The family lived near school, church, shopping and friends and never owned a car, walking everywhere they went. Sister Mary learned to sew at an early age and often sewed for herself and her younger sister.

Sister Mary’s first grade teacher at St. Gregory the Great School, Sister Alfred Marie, influenced her to become an IHM. This teacher had 90 students in the morning class and 90 in the afternoon. She was creative in her teaching methods and often sang the lessons to the children. Sister Mary was a good student, and she loved to read. She enjoyed going to school every day and knew one day she would become a nun and a teacher, thanks to Sister Alfred Marie.

Having decided to become a sister in the first grade, she kept it a secret until it was finally time to tell her family. Her mother was delighted she wanted to be an IHM, and confided that she always wanted Mary to become a sister but wanted the decision to be hers alone.

Sister Mary came to Monroe in June 1943, along with three of her classmates from St. Gregory, and was received by the community in January 1944. She began teaching fourth grade at St. Charles in Detroit in 1946. This was followed by years teaching at St. Rose, St. Vincent de Paul, Annunciation, St. Matthew, St. Edward and Blessed Sacrament in Detroit. Other schools included St. Philip, Battle Creek; Holy Cross, Marine City; and Sacred Heart, in Roseville.

After more than 25 years in the classroom, Sister Mary became the media director at St. Gertrude Parish in St. Clair Shores, Mich. She went on to teach at St. Isaac Jogues in St. Clair Shores and then to become the St. Isaac librarian. This was followed by ministry at five different Michigan schools as librarian and also as librarian for Visitation and as an assistant for the Motherhouse Library. In 1999, the Michigan Catholic Library Association presented her with the Gabriel Richard Award for Meritorious Contributions to Catholic Librarianship.

In reflecting on her life, Sister Mary says, “In the end, I think my greatest concerns will be, ‘how much love did I have in my life? How did I share my love? Who loved me? Whom did I treasure? Whose lives did I impact? Did my life make a difference for someone else? How did I serve the world?’”

“I’m certain that my only concerns will be about how I did or did not fill my life with love.”
Sister Remi (Mary Remi) Pauwels attended St. John in Jackson, Mich., taught by IHM Sisters. The sisters projected joy, family spirit and kindness. She was drawn to their lifestyle and wanted to emulate them.

She remembers as early as fourth grade she thought about a religious vocation, and the idea of becoming a nun stayed with her while she was having fun in high school. But when asked about a religious vocation by one of her high school teachers, Sister Remi said she wasn’t interested. “Other things in life were much more attractive at that point.”

However, the thought of religious life kept haunting her. Through prayer and discernment, she knew “this is what God wants me to do.” With the support of her parents, she entered the IHM community shortly after her high school graduation.

Sister Remi’s first mission was teaching at St. Charles School in Coldwater, Mich. The sisters lived in an old farmhouse that was very “homey.” She recalls that “after two-and-a-half years of institutional living, this was ‘home’ again.”

Her next assignment was St. John in Monroe, where she taught first grade and acted as directing teacher for several of the junior sisters who were doing their student teaching. Sister Remi was then missioned, along with four others, to open St. Michael School in Miami.

After four years in Florida, her assignment was to the little town of Adjuntas, deep in the mountains of Puerto Rico. This was truly a missionary endeavor; converting an abandoned barn into an elementary school. Those were a happy six years. One year at Queen of Hope in Detroit cushioned the transition from Spanish language and culture back to the United States.

Over the next 17 years, Sister Remi taught at St. John High School in Jackson; was principal of St. Phillip High School in Battle Creek and taught Spanish at Lumen Christi High School in Jackson. During these years, many summers were spent completing a master’s degree in Spanish.

Sister Remi was elected IHM provincial of the Northwest Province. After completing her term, she ministered at Aquinas High School in Southgate, Mich., as dean of students for seven years. She went to St. Mary Catholic Central High School (SMCC) and taught Spanish for eight years before retiring and moving to the Motherhouse.

Sister Remi has loved teaching and continues to substitute-teach at SMCC. “God’s been good to me. I have good health, I'm able to do it, and I enjoy it.” She is a Eucharistic Minister in the Motherhouse Health Care Center, visits the older sisters, assists in the Service Office and has other household responsibilities.

“I am grateful for my life – the whole bundle of it!” she notes. “I've been very blessed. All my experiences influenced me to be the person I am.” And each of those experiences reaffirms her conviction that she is where she should be.

“Getting to know God is a lifetime's work,” she observes.
Sister Cecilia (Mary Dalene) Schmidt was born in Wisconsin, and her family moved to Michigan when she was three months old. They eventually lived on the property of the Franciscan-run Duns Scotus College in Southfield.

She first thought about religious life in second grade. “I don’t know why,” she says. “I just felt that’s what I wanted to do in my life. Having Dominican Sisters for eight years, St. Joseph Sisters for a year and IHMs for three years posed a dilemma. I chose the IHMs because of my love for Mary and the fact that IHM Sisters were stricter; I wanted to give my all to God.”

Sister Cecilia joined the IHM community a month after graduating from Girls’ Catholic Central High School in Detroit.

Her first teaching assignments were in the Detroit area: St. Boniface, St. Mary, Epiphany and Christ the King. She taught grades two and three at St. Peter Claver in Mobile, Ala., for five years.

“I enjoyed teaching,” Sister Cecilia notes. “The experience in Mobile was one I will never forget. Those were segregation days, and teaching at St. Peter Claver with the black community opened my eyes to the struggles of the poor and the pain of racism and prejudice.”

She returned to Michigan to teach, first at Holy Name in Birmingham, then St. Agnes (Detroit) and back to Holy Name. She became principal at St. Columban in Birmingham and then taught at St. Anne in Warren.

In 1974, Sister Cecilia began ministering at the Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, S.D., teaching religion in grades five through eight. She spent five years in pastoral ministry at St. Patrick Parish in Anadarko, Okla., with the Caddo Indians before taking a year of renewal and then ministering as a pastoral assistant at Santa Rita Parish in Carrizozo, N.M.

After a year at Santa Rita, “I talked to my superior and was told about some opportunities in Minnesota. My heart said, ‘Who wants to go to Minnesota?’ but that’s where I ended up.” Her next ministry – one that lasted 23 years – was as pastoral assistant at St. Joseph Parish in Chisholm, Minn.

They were busy years. Sister Cecilia and a friend started a Befriender Ministry Program and trained people to listen with their heart to those in need. She performed wake and funeral services, coordinated the RCIA programs and visited hospital and nursing homes and shut-ins.

“I was busy every day,” she says. “A lot of times there wasn’t a lot on my calendar, but before you knew it, I was all over the place. But I loved it. That’s probably why it took me so long to retire.”

Following her retirement, she volunteered in Buhl and Chisholm, Minn., before returning to the IHM Motherhouse.

“For however long God keeps me on this Earth, I will be eternally grateful for my religious vocation,” she reflects. “I am blessed and proud to have been an IHM. God is very much alive in my heart, and my hands are still open to God’s will.”
Sister Janet Sullivan was the 10th of 12 children. “I began to grasp the importance of prayer, hospitality, caring and sharing at a very early age!” she notes.

She was born in Canada, but the family moved to Detroit when Sister Janet was a year old. Her IHM teachers inspired her and sparked her interest in a religious vocation. In 1944, she became the fifth Sullivan daughter to join the IHM community.

She earned a master’s degree in education; taught second grade at Blessed Sacrament and Annunciation in Detroit; grade four at St. Mary of Redford; grades three and four at Christ the King in Detroit; grades two, three and four at St. Michael in Flint; and grades four and five at St. John in Fenton. She also served as principal at St. John for five years.

In the early 1970s, she did parish census in two different locales. “I encountered adults who were searching or questioning Vatican II implementations in the Church,” she says. “Some were angry with their past Church experiences; some very lonely; some in need of reconciliation; some feeling unaccepted; and others hungering for a renewed spirituality that would deepen their relationship with God. These experiences prompted me to consider another direction in my ministry.”

She immersed herself in pastoral ministry, serving in parishes in the Detroit area, as well as at St. Mary Parish in Charlotte, Mich. In 1987, she became the pastoral associate at St. Lawrence Parish in Utica, Mich.

“St. Lawrence Parish has become like family,” says Sister Janet. “Together we have strive[d] to be life-giving instruments of God’s love, compassion, hope and forgiveness. A spirit of awareness of God’s presence in all people and in all creation, continues to surface in new responsible and creative actions amongst our staff, council, commissions and parishioners.”

In reflecting on her years in the IHM community, Sister Janet says, “There is no way I can capture the many blessings of 70 years in active ministry. I pause now to join in harmony with all my IHM Sisters, living and deceased, as we sing and pray the refrain of our Centennial Hymn: ‘Praise, love, thanksgiving, our God to thee.’”
Sister Carolyn (William Mary) Campbell was born in Jackson, Mich., the oldest of five. She grew up in a neighborhood with most of her extended family, and the IHM Sisters taught her at St. John Grade School and High School.

From the time she was about 10, she felt called to religious life, which she describes as “just knowing this is what I want to do with my life.”

She knew she was where she belonged when she entered the IHM community. Sister Carolyn recalls skating on the River Raisin while she was a postulant and laughs as she remembers how dirty she got picking potatoes out at the farm.

After her student teaching, she taught second grade at Epiphany, Detroit. She then went to St. Regis (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.), where she taught seventh grade. These experiences provided the skills and training for Sister Carolyn to teach junior high and become a principal in Puerto Rico.

She was ministering in Puerto Rico (as a teacher and then as a principal) during Vatican II. While in Puerto Rico, she returned to her baptismal name and began to wear street clothes.

After seven years, Sister Carolyn left Puerto Rico and studied for a year at the Mexican-American Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas. In 1976, she and two other IHM Sisters set up an office in New York for the overseas mission province, a center for the IHM Sisters returning to the United States from overseas missions. During this time, she also ministered as director of religious education in a parochial school in New York City.

In 1981, Sister Carolyn moved to Florida to become principal of St. Michael in Miami. During the Christmas break in 1988, she returned home to care for her dying father. She went back to Miami to finish the school year and remained for one more year before returning to Michigan to be principal at St. Albert the Great in Dearborn Heights, Mich.

She continued her education with a clinical pastoral education (CPE) program and did her internship at Mercy Memorial Hospital in Monroe, which hired her as a chaplain once she had earned her CPE certification. She stayed for six years before being elected to the IHM Leadership Council during the renovation of the Motherhouse. Her admiration for the sisters living there increased.

“I admire them so much because they had to move from here to the Academy. We were in very crowded conditions, but we were all in it together. It was a wonderful time of community. The spirit of sacrifice and working together as a whole seemed to bring out the best in people. I got to know the sisters so well and appreciated all that they were and had done.”

Following her term in Leadership she returned to Mercy Hospital. She has always relied on reflection and prayer to stay her course. “I truly believe that this is where I belong.”

“One ministry prepares you for the next.”
When she was 4, Sister Jannita Marie Complo saw IHM Sisters in their blue habits; she misidentified them as the Blessed Mother. Her mother corrected her and told her they worked for God. “I decided right then and there, that’s what I would do,” Sister Jannita recalls.

She grew up in Monroe and attended St. Mary Academy. During her senior year of high school, she told Sister Marie Chantal she was not going to college; she was going to become a sister. Surprised, Sister Marie Chantal replied, “I expected you to be on a trapeze in a circus.”

Undeterred, Sister Jannita found a sponsor and set her plan in motion. In August 1953, she exuberantly arrived at the Motherhouse with anticipation and the assurance that she “was going to work for Jesus.” When she received her religious name, she was given her own: Jannita. She was so pleased that she jumped up and hugged Mother Teresa McGivney.

Sister Jannita taught first grade at St. Thomas Aquinas (Detroit) and St. John (Monroe) before teaching at Marygrove College. She earned her doctorate in curriculum development from Wayne State University. While writing her doctoral dissertation, she created Dramakinetics, which uses movement and drama to foster a child’s kinesthetic intelligence.

“When I first began teaching, I noticed that regardless of children’s intellects or abilities, they had one thing in common. They could all use their bodies to express themselves,” Sister Jannita explains.

After she earned her doctorate, she became the director of student teaching at Marygrove. Through her Dramakinetics classes, many teachers

have used this method to develop the potential in children.

Sparked by an interest in Native American dance, Sister Jannita received a grant to work with the Jemez Indians in New Mexico. She documented her movement activities with the Jemez Indians in her first *Dramakinetics in the Classroom* book. While ministering in New Mexico, she received an Honor Award for Meritorious Service from the United States Department of the Interior and an Outstanding Administer award from the National Indian School Board of Education.

When she returned to Monroe, Sister Jannita started the Children’s Creativity Center to provide a learning space for children with special needs. When it first opened, she placed an advertisement in the *Monroe Evening News*, “Just as IHM co-founder Theresa Maxis did in 1845 to draw students to the first St. Mary Academy.” In the 19 years the center was open, she and her staff served more than 500 children. Her new challenge is to update Dramakinetics to include the elderly with dementia. She is currently writing a handbook for caregivers.

She notes that, “I have always been blessed that the community has allowed me to use my talents. My superiors saw potential and I was able to develop it through education. Other blessings were the ordination of my brother and the growing expansion of Dramakinetics in Cincinnati.”
Sister Jane (John Fisher) Farrell was born in Detroit and attended Gesu Elementary School and Immaculata High School. She joined the IHM community right after high school and she laughs as she says she “lasted for two weeks.” She was terribly homesick. She called her mother who came right away to pick her up. Sister Jane’s heart was set on attending University of Michigan and becoming a dental hygienist, but she went to Marygrove College and fell in love with it. She earned her bachelor’s degree in teaching and taught for two years in the Detroit Public Schools.

On her way to California with two friends, Sister Jane decided to return to the Motherhouse to join the community, an emotional decision that felt right but could not be articulated. As a postulant, she taught in Monroe. As a second year novice, she taught in Dexter, Mich. Later, she taught in Detroit, Mount Morris, Mich., and, “for six great years,” at Immaculata High School. “The kids were wonderful and the faculty was great,” she says. She enjoys keeping in touch with her students.

Sister Jane earned her doctorate in history from University of Michigan and taught at Marygrove and at Siena Heights. She ministered briefly as assistant to the president of St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas, but the heat was unappealing and after six months of not seeing a student, she returned to the Midwest. For the next 10 years, she ministered as principal of Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill., and spent another 10 years teaching at Mother McAuley High School in Chicago.

Following a sabbatical year, she went to the Motherhouse as the IHM archivist before returning to Chicago where she volunteered, helping those less fortunate. She came home to the Motherhouse four years ago when she turned 80.

Sister Jane says, “I think the greatest joy of religious life is your relationship with God.” It was essential for her to be part of the community in order to have that relationship. When she joined, she says, “We lived in a different Church. It didn’t encourage people to have individual relationships with God. You did it through the Church and its institutions.”

Sister Jane spent time with both the Adrian Dominicans and the Mercy Sisters and feels her views were broadened because of these experiences. “Religious women all have one thing in common and that is God. But we approach it in different ways.”

The highlight of being a part of the IHM community for Sister Jane is the Jubilarian celebration.

“God only lets you go so long before he pulls the string.”

“There you feel the true depths of what it means to be part of the community. Somehow you know you’re part of something bigger than yourself.”

During Community Days when the congregation comes together, Sister Jane says with great emotion, “you feel the holiness of the community. We don’t all agree but somehow or another you knew these are women who are committed.”
Sister Laura (Laura Mary) Hardage was the only child of loving parents, and her life has been a miracle from the start. When doctors told her mother that her pregnancy was not viable and recommended she terminate the pregnancy, she did not; her parents felt blessed to have Laura in their lives.

She taught sixth and seventh grades in Albuquerque, N.M., a time of grace when she “really came to realize the power of the Holy Spirit” in her life. She then served in North Carolina in parish pastoral ministry, eventually becoming the director of Young Adult and Campus Ministry for the Diocese of Raleigh.

“I really enjoyed those 10 years especially the ‘Encounter with Christ’ retreats with college students and the young adults in the workplace,” she recalls.

Following a year of renewal, Sister Laura served as a director of religious education at a parish in Phoenix before entering a year’s residency in clinical pastoral education (CPE) in Phoenix. She then ministered as a certified hospital chaplain in Lexington, Ky., for 16 years before returning to Monroe to serve on the Pastoral Care staff at the Motherhouse.

As she reflects on her time in the community, Sister Laura marvels at God’s ways.

“It is very humbling the way God uses us, beyond what we can ask or imagine. My greatest joy is to be with my sisters and the people God calls me to be with on our journey here.”

Sister Laura attended Epiphany Elementary School in Detroit, where she was taught by the IHMs. She was inspired by their love for God and their happiness; the seed to join the community was planted during those years. She attended public high school but continued her relationship with the sisters through the Sodality in the parish.

She credits Mother Teresa McGivney for her decision to join the community. “There was something extraordinary about her. She had a joy and a love for God that radiated from her.” Mother Teresa invited her to enter the community and that was enough to convince Sister Laura.

She began her ministry of teaching at St. Mary of Redford, St. John, Jackson, Mich., and then back to St. Mary of Redford. During this time, her mother died from cancer. The loss was very difficult, however, by leaning on God, Sister Laura felt peace and joy. The sisters she lived with were a huge support and “such a gift,” she says.

After teaching at St. Mary, she went to Sacred Heart, Auburn Heights, Mich., to teach and then became principal. She pursued her master’s degree in administration at Wayne State University and became the first principal for Lake Michigan Catholic Schools, the merged primary and middle schools of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Mich.

“Being in formation during Vatican II and studying the Scripture and the Vatican II documents with Sister Margaret (Benedicta) Brennan was truly a blessed time for me,” Sister Laura notes.

She taught sixth and seventh grades in Albuquerque, N.M., a time of grace when she “really came to realize the power of the Holy Spirit” in her life. She then served in North Carolina in parish pastoral ministry, eventually becoming the director of Young Adult and Campus Ministry for the Diocese of Raleigh.

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“It is very humbling the way God uses us, beyond what we can ask or imagine. My greatest joy is to be with my sisters and the people God calls me to be with on our journey here.”
Sister Shirley (Angela Mary) Houff was born and raised in Lorain, Ohio. She attended St. Anthony School, which was run by the Franciscan Sisters.

She attended St. Mary High School where the IHM Sisters taught her and entered the IHM community right after high school. Her father had predicted that would happen: he frequently said while she was growing up, “Shirley's going to go to the convent.”

Sister Shirley flatly denied it, “But sure enough, it was always there.”

Because of her association with the sisters, she was drawn to religious life and had entertained the idea of becoming a sister when she was in eighth grade. Seeing the religious devotion of her grandmother and having an uncle who was a priest also had an impact on Sister Shirley’s decision. She came to the IHM community instead of the Franciscans because the lifestyle of the IHMs appeared more attractive than the Franciscan Sisters and she had a close relationship with an IHM Sister.

During novitiate, the novice mistress had received a letter from Sister Shirley’s mother concerned that Shirley was not the same calm girl they had sent to the community. Her mother thought she was displaying signs of tension and was worried about her well-being.

Sister Shirley was surprised that her mother wrote the letter and wrote back assuring her that she was well. There were times during her novitiate that were difficult but not detrimental. She says “Well, we were all in the same boat.” The camaraderie and friendships with her classmates helped her get through formation.

Sister Shirley's first mission was teaching fourth grade at St. Martin on the Lake in Detroit for a year. For many years, she taught at St. Regis in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., but lived at the Marian High School Convent nearby. This was followed by years teaching at St. John in Monroe, St. John in Benton Harbor, Mich., and St. Mary High School in Wayne, Mich. Following her mother's death, she taught at Lorain Catholic High School in her hometown; she wanted to be close to her father. During the summers, she completed her master's degree in mathematics at Wayne State University. Later, she moved to Arizona to live near her father after he and his second wife relocated from Ohio.

Sister Shirley then taught at Xavier College Preparatory School in Phoenix, where she taught history and math and became chair of the Mathematics department. (She comes by her math ability naturally; her father was always very good at it.) She also served as a guidance counselor at Xavier. In 2005, Sister Shirley moved back to Monroe to be closer to her sister. She worked as the coordinator of transportation for the community, arranging transportation for the sisters when they went to their appointments.

Sister Shirley now works in the Archives at the Motherhouse. In her spare time she likes doing crossword puzzles. “I like looking for answers,” she says.
Sister Edith Marie Martinek credits her parents, James and Edith, for her vocation. Their deep faith, devotion to their weekly worship and their lives of personal prayer inspired her, and Duns Scotus, a Franciscan monastery, provided an atmosphere of peace and prayer.

She joined the IHM Sisters shortly after her high school graduation and was joyfully received into the community in June 1954. Her first teaching assignment was at Christ the King in Detroit.

“I spent 36 years teaching small children,” Sister Edith Marie notes. “They were ever new and provided fun and challenge.” Schools included nine in Michigan and one each in Minnesota and Florida.

Following her mother’s death, she returned to school to prepare for a new ministry in pastoral care. After the school year ended in 1991, Sister Edith Marie left St. Albert the Great School in Dearborn Heights, Mich., and began a serving in pastoral ministry at Resurrection Parish in Standish, Mich. She stayed for 15 years before retiring.

“In ministry, I gave my time and energy to the spiritual care of the sick, the homebound, the hospitalized and the dying,” she says. “These dear people teach you much about gratitude.”

A friend notes that Sister Edith Marie’s 50th Jubilee was a highlight, not just for Resurrection Parish, but for the town too.

“She was remarkably patient in her hospice situations. Love and thoughtfulness are her hallmarks; ‘generous’ is her middle name. There isn’t any Catholic in any town in the Bay area who doesn’t know her. She traveled all the dirt back roads in her days at Standish; hospitality was always a given for her.”

The friend also notes that “the beautiful sidewalk memorial where bricks were purchased by families wouldn’t exist without Sister Edith Marie. Sections were dedicated to Scripture selections, and with wonderful plants and statues it became a retreat space for prayer and reflection.”

Sister Edith Marie left Resurrection Parish in 2009. She ministered as a volunteer at the IHM Motherhouse and is now back in the Bay area.
Sister Mary (Mary Immaculate) McDevitt says she couldn't avoid the IHM Sisters; they taught her at Gesu Elementary School and Immaculata High School.

Her religious formation started in grade school and she participated in social service activities with the poor and sick in her neighborhood. But it was something one of her teachers said to her in 11th grade that made her realize a religious vocation was right for her.

“The teacher said, ‘Don’t ever love anything so much that you can’t let it go if God asks,’” she recalls.

Sister Mary wanted to do “something big.” The IHM Sisters, “were very joyful, and they were very professional,” so becoming an IHM was the obvious decision.

“If someone asked me, ‘What’s the best gift you’ve had?’ it was that I was able to study at many levels,” Sister Mary notes. “It was a wonderful education.” She found time to have fun during her studies as a novice and recalls singing in a quartet with three other novices. They called themselves “The All Wet Quartet,” and their music made people laugh.

She earned her master’s degree in theology from Marquette University. After teaching theology at the high school and college levels for about six years, Sister Mary became director of novices. This was followed by ministry at the newly opened Visitation House of Prayer on the Motherhouse campus. During that time, she retraced the steps of the founders of the IHM community, visiting the home of St. Alphonsus and the hometown of Teresa of Avila among other sites. This trip gave her a better understanding of the foundation of the community, which enhanced her ability to minister; she became a certified spiritual director and earned her Doctor of Ministry degree from Regis University in Denver.

Sister Mary’s years at Visitation were followed by three years serving as provincial for the Northeast Province and then ministering within the Archdiocese of Detroit and Colombiere Center. She ministered in Aurora, Ont., as a spiritual director at Southdown, an addiction recovery center. She moved to Toronto to become the director of pastoral spiritual formation at Catholic Children’s Aid Society and then taught at Saints Cyril & Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Mich. She now ministers at Visitation North as a spiritual director and works on her many writing projects.

Sister Mary reflects on her time with the community and feels her greatest joy has been “the Jubilee days, just to realize the beauty of that commitment. And also to realize from inside myself that the best we can remain is faithful. It’s not always perfect and I can celebrate that too.”

She is most grateful for her wonderful educational foundation from first grade through college. “I had such wonderful women teachers. And for that I am very, very grateful to be part of the community.”

“God took care of it if I made mistakes.”
Sister Madeleine Sophie Weber and her family were always part of an IHM parish.

It was “purely God” that drew her to the community.

After finishing graduate school, she began praying about her next move in life; she had anticipated getting married and having a family. “But the Lord said, ‘Wait a minute!’” So Sister Madeleine Sophie took a step back and waited to see what God wanted. A very good priest friend of the family suggested she look at the IHM community. “I told God I would try it,” she says.

Day by day, God gave her the grace to get through the discernment to join the community. Her first mission was at St. Michael in Monroe. From there she went to Christ the King in Detroit and taught for a year, followed by teaching assignments at St. Mary, Mount Morris, Mich., and then St. Philip High School in Battle Creek, Mich. Afterward, Sister Madeleine Sophie went to teach at the fairly new Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill. While she was there, she started a guidance counseling program. She stayed in Westchester until she was asked to go to Austin, Texas, to begin the psychology major program at Maryhill College at St. Edward’s University.

Sister Madeleine Sophie realized that psychology was more than research, experimentation and teaching, so she set out to get her students involved in the community. She initiated a community service internship program for students to provide help to those in need in the area. She also helped start the gerontology program at St. Edward’s.

“It’s God’s planning and our Blessed Mother’s that I am able to do the things I’ve been able to do. They’ve done things through me.

“It’s the work of God not my work,” Sister Madeleine Sophie emphasizes.

In her “retirement,” she volunteers with South Austin Caregivers, which helps older adults be able to stay in their own homes. She also works with the Commission on Aging in the Austin Diocese. Not only does she work with individuals on remaining independent, but she also educates the community on the services available through the commission. She enjoys talking to people of different faiths and says, “Evangelizing is important.”

Sister Madeleine Sophie’s greatest joy since joining the community has been, “just being in it. Diversity. God’s graces to get me through one day at a time.” She is most grateful for “being with an identity. You cannot take life for granted. The Sacred Heart of Jesus and our Blessed Mother are very important in my life. They are my reason for being. It was their idea that I become an IHM, not mine.”

“It’s only been by the grace of God that I have been able to do things ... God and the Blessed Mother.”
Sister Lucy Abbey says she “came to two communities.” She initially entered the IHM community in Philadelphia right after high school graduation. “What I saw in the IHMs in Philadelphia was a sense of family; that they cared for one and other. I am suited to [religious life] because it calls for a whole-hearted commitment involving lots of people.”

Sister Lucy was a member of the Philadelphia community until 1985 and taught religion and Spanish at various high schools. She also had the opportunity to travel and study in Italy and Spain. She worked in New York City for three years, where she enjoyed ministering as a religious educator at a parish and frequently worked with the Hispanic parishioners. Occasionally, she saw the TV show Law and Order being taped.

When she saw that the Philadelphia community was heading in a more conservative direction than what she wanted, Sister Lucy had a divided heart. She knew she wanted to remain in a religious life, and having visited IHMs in Monroe for many summers and connecting with their charism, she transferred.

“I felt at home,” Sister Lucy says. “People had the same sense of commitment.” With a master’s degree in theology, she appreciated the congregational learning on new theology. “This was really in accord with how I think. This is how I want to live religious life.”

Once she came to Monroe, she spent time at the Motherhouse to get to know the sisters of Monroe and ministered as a social justice advocate with Groundwork in Detroit. Sister Lucy also spent time in Honduras and Nicaragua.

She worked at St. Suzanne Parish in Detroit as a pastoral associate, which nurtured her desire to work with people living in big cities. She got involved with both the neighborhood and the parish. “I was interested in the quality of life in the neighborhood as well as the faith inside the parish,” she says. Sister Lucy worked tirelessly to get many after-school activities started in the buildings owned by the parish.

After 16 years at the parish, she worked a few part-time temporary jobs before teaching Spanish and religion at Covenant High School. Sister Lucy went on to earn a master’s degree in social justice at Marygrove College; taught English as a Second Language at S.W. Solutions in Detroit for two years and then went to St. Christopher Parish in Detroit, where she ministers in community organizing.

Sister Lucy’s greatest joy as an IHM is “feeling that I really belong. This is the right place for me because of the people and because of the style of religious life. And I can make choices for ministry that fit me. One of the things I gave up in transferring congregations is being known by the congregation. I come here with a background in all kinds of things, including theology and Spanish, and people don’t know that.”
Sister Gail (John Maureen) Addis grew up in Mount Clemens, taught by IHM Sisters. The idea of becoming a sister had been in her thoughts since grade school, and during her junior year in high school, a visit to the Motherhouse and a conversation with Mother Anna Marie Grix aided her decision.

“I told Mother Anna Marie I’d come to try it. She told me, ‘don’t come to try it; come thinking you’re going to stay.’” She entered the community right after graduation and realized she was in the right place, enjoying what the community taught her and the companionship.

Sister Gail taught second grade at St. Columban in Birmingham, Mich. The school closed after her first year, but she stayed to work at the parish and teach religious education. During a year of renewal before making final vows, she provided pastoral care at the Department of Social Services in Coldwater, Mich., on the women’s long-term ward at Ypsilanti State Mental Hospital and at a physical rehabilitation hospital in Detroit. She also took courses in clinical pastoral education.

Afterward, Sister Gail went to Oklahoma and ministered in religious education and provided catechist training for four parishes. She moved to another parish in Oklahoma as pastoral associate and director of religious education and youth ministry and then to a larger suburban parish where she organized small faith communities. This was followed by a ministry in pastoral and religious education at a parish in Oklahoma City, where she started an HIV/AIDS ministry.

She began a Meals on Wheels program for people with HIV/AIDS and gave talks about HIV/AIDS to various groups. After 10 years, Sister Gail went to work at Catholic Charities in Oklahoma City to expand the AIDS ministry while continuing the Meals on Wheels program and HIV/AIDS presentations. She also started a residence for those with HIV/AIDS. It fascinated her that “there were so few Catholics [in the area] and so few sisters. There were all kinds of new opportunities. You had the opportunity to do things you’ve never done before. You had to step up to the plate.

“I learned and grew a lot. The AIDS ministry was my passion and one of the biggest gifts of my life. It was a joy even in the middle of all the dying because the people were so great.”

Sister Gail also started a ministry offering retreats for ecumenical groups of women, an opportunity to pull women of diverse interests and backgrounds together for spiritual enrichment.

In 2003, she came back to Michigan to be closer to her elderly mother. She is now the pastoral administer for St. Joseph Parish in Bay City, where she does everything but perform the sacraments.

Sister Gail says, “I am grateful for all the opportunities I have had being a member of the congregation.”

“Sometimes you just have to do something and you don’t understand why. But if you don’t do it, you won’t grow. The decision to do it is the most important thing.”
The seed for religious life was planted in Sister Margaret (Mary Hofbauer) Alandt when she was chosen to be in a diocesan vocation procession in first grade. She came to know and love the IHM Sisters in school, and although her mother wanted her to be a Dominican, her parents were very supportive of her decision to join the IHMs.

Halfway through her sophomore year of college, Sister Margaret knew it was time to join. “Religious life is a lifestyle and I was called to this lifestyle,” she notes. She wanted to give her life to the God she loved.

Her first mission was teaching first grade at St. Regis (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.), followed by ministry at St. Mary (Marshall, Mich.), and then St. Colman (Farmington, Mich.). She worked in the IHM business office for eight years while completing her master’s degree in nonprofit administration from Notre Dame.

Sister Margaret moved to North Carolina and ministered for 11 parishes as the religious education co-coordinator before feeling called to be with the people of El Salvador and Honduras. After further discernment, she was sent to Brazil instead and did pastoral work.

She loved the people and culture. “It felt like home,” she says. “The simplicity, the rootedness.” She lived on a hill in a dwelling without running water. “I learned a new way to be. I experienced Church in a new way. I learned that there is more than one way of doing things.”

When she returned to the Detroit area to be near her aging parents, she ministered at Groundwork for Justice, then as a pastoral administrator at St. Boniface Parish. She went on to work part-time with Core City Neighborhoods as an accountant and the Detroit Medical Society, which provided primary health care in area churches. When both part-time positions began leading to full-time, Sister Margaret made a decision to stay on as the financial manager with Core City Neighborhoods.

She was struck by “what racism meant to people who meant something to me.” She became involved with anti-racism activism and worked to develop programs for racism awareness; she has been instrumental in anti-racism campaigns around Detroit. “It is an awareness, to get us in touch with our own reality, to recognize that racism really has been a part of our story,” she notes.

After Core City Neighborhoods, Sister Margaret taught briefly and then ministered with West Detroit Interfaith Community Organization and with MOSES, a faith-based community organizing group. She served as IHM novice director for three years before returning to MOSES and then ministered with Compassionate Companions for two years. In 2012, she was elected to the IHM Leadership Council.

Sister Margaret is grateful for her “experiences, relationships, education, spirituality. There is no way I could have envisioned all my experiences, and each prepared me for the next.”
Annemarie (Marie Juda) Askwith grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and attended Marygrove College (as her cousin did).

Like many college students, she questioned the direction to take upon graduation and considered either a contemplative or a missionary vocation. “I went through stages of indecision and finally they pulled together,” she recalls.

Sister Annemarie credits a patient mentor’s “spirit of care, candor and humor” for her joining the IHM community.

After completing her degree in childhood psychology and education, Sister Annemarie taught nursery school through elementary grades and ministered in special education programs, campus ministry, pastoral work, adult GED classes and employment work with at-risk adults. She currently is a part-time case manager for a three-county Community Dispute Resolution Center.

Sister Annemarie earned a master’s degree in applied philosophy. She feels she was fortunate IHMs encouraged her to study the works of Thomas Berry. Berry was able to perceive that the scientific data coming in on the story and evolution of the universe and Earth also carried new depths and breadths and corrections to our story of how, where, what and who is sacred.

She began to notice how often Scripture referenced Jesus as crediting another Source for his wisdom and energy. It may well be that many convictions that Jesus carried, counter to the practices of his time, lay in his ability to “read” the scriptures of nature and life in addition to deep themes of the Old Testament.

Sister Annemarie wants her world to consciously include nature. “It has been inspiring to see how many persons and groups are working to wake us up to the fragile condition of our ecosystems. We are just beginning to recognize that the well-being of air, water, soil and ecosystems positively affects the health of every human discipline from politics to economics to employment.”

One of Sister Annemarie’s surprises has been to return to work in her childhood region where she was able to live with her parents when they had need. She gained so much from that time. She is now living in and working with that space to better express and extend friendship and reflection.

Thinking about the future, Sister Annemarie says she hopes to honor the IHM community. “I admire the present sisters so much because they are gracefully letting go of a world that was very successful and beautiful. That takes an education. Many people resist even listening to new thoughts let alone seriously considering the best of them.

“Openness to the future is one of the most beautiful qualities of our IHM community. Our seniors are striking in their peace, insight, faith and sense. They have confidence that Providence is at work in all that is and that together we will continue making worlds truly wonderful.”

“Love and life and growth come in many colors and sing many songs.”
The Grey Nuns of Ottawa taught Sister Camille Brouillard throughout her school years growing up in Massachusetts.

Being a bit of a troublemaker, a religious vocation was not part of her thinking. But one of the sisters who taught Sister Camille planted the seed that she may have a calling.

In the end, “It was my deep relationship with God,” that directed her toward religious life. Her father was not happy with her decision because he was going to miss her, but her mother (who Sister Camille remains grateful to have been able to care for during her final days) was supportive. She spent 15 years as a Grey Nun.

She took some time to discern with a friend who was a Trappist monk and realized her ideas about growth and change were more aligned with the IHM community than the Grey Nuns. With her first visit to Monroe, she knew she belonged.

“Sister Margaret (Benedicta) Brennan was giving a talk on IHM spirituality, and the deep spiritual relationship with God resonated with me. And the sisters, even the elderly, were so full of life. I knew this is where God wanted me.”

In 1978, Sister Camille arrived to begin her life with the IHMs. She initially lived at the Motherhouse, visiting with the residents, working in an office and other tasks that allowed her to get to know the community. The sisters helped her feel comfortable and welcome.

After a year, Sister Camille became a pastoral minister at St. Joseph Parish in Monroe. She completed a degree in social work at Marygrove College and began to work with Haitian refugees in Florida. She was impressed by the Haitians’ strong commitment to faith to help them through difficult times. She ministered at a clinic that cared for Haitian children infected with HIV/AIDS. She and her coworkers went into the children’s homes to work with their families, which she describes as “a real learning experience.”

After 14 years, she took a year of renewal and returned to Detroit to live with IHM novices and then worked in transportation at the Motherhouse and then ministered as a social worker for the IHM Health Care Center. Now Sister Camille spends her time doing activities with the sisters on the Memory Care Unit, a ministry she loves. “It’s just being in the present and loving people and enjoying,” she says.

Her greatest joy in the IHM community is “the energy for justice and peace. The education too! It’s exciting because ministry isn’t confined to one or two things. It’s wherever your gifts take you. I’ve always had the feeling that where one of us is, we’re all there. There is something about it when we all get together; an energy that we have.”

“It’s about relationship with God; relationships with whomever. That’s why I love where we are now. The table is so much bigger.”
Sister Virginia (Marie Amata) Celmer was introduced to the IHM Sisters at Immaculata High School, Detroit.

She had had Sisters of Charity (black habits) in grade school, and Sister Ginny thought IHMs were “funny looking” because of their blue habits.

During her years at Immaculata, IHM spirituality drew her to community. Sister Ginny’s first mission (1968-1969) was teaching junior high school in a shared-time program at St. Mary, Monroe. This was a valuable experience both in education and in small town culture. She had seven students, all cousins with the same last name, within two of the grades she taught. She went on to teach at Marian High School (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.) and at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School (Westchester, Ill.).

During 1975-1976, Sister Ginny spent her year of renewal, teaching “survival” English to Vietnamese refugees, making a 30-day retreat in Guelph, Ont., and returning to Chicago for clinical pastoral education at Lutheran General Hospital. She then spent a year teaching at St. Thomas the Apostle High School in Hyde Park, Ill., before beginning ministry as a counselor and chaplain at Mercy Center for Health Care Services in Aurora, Ill. During that time, she earned her master’s degree in theology from Saint Louis University.

With the encouragement of the Department of Psychology at Mercy Center and the support of the IHM congregation, Sister Ginny began doctoral work in psychology. She was soon accepted into the program at Texas Tech University and earned her doctorate in 1986. While studying, she was also vicar for religious for the new diocese of Lubbock. “So much in my life is pure God because so many opportunities were created out of nothing for me,” she reflects.

As vicar, she advocated for continuing education for the sisters in Lubbock. Her creativity and innovation were noticed and appreciated by those in San Antonio and she was offered a position at The Consultation Center for Clergy and Religious upon graduation.

While in that position, teaching at Oblate School of Theology, managing a private practice and doing spiritual direction and retreat work, Sister Ginny was involved in a serious car accident. During her long recovery, she realized she “did not need to save the world.”

When she was able, she put her energy into her private practice and other creative endeavors. “This has given me the flexibility to serve where there are needs.”

Sister Ginny has been a licensed psychologist for more than 25 years and utilizes the services of a therapy dog in her practice. (For more about Sister Ginny’s ministry and her current “assistant” Grace, go to www.VirginiaCelmerPhD.com.)

Sister Ginny says that among her greatest joys “is to see people appropriate freedom and wholeness and joy for themselves. My ministry is pure gift as I witness the power of redemption firsthand.”
Sister Judith Coyle was taught by IHM Sisters from elementary school through high school in Flint, Mich. Her family knew the IHM sisters well, and having had a strong sense of vocation since she was 12, she joined the community after high school.

Sister Judy says her vocation arose from the tragic death of her older cousin. She realized she “needed to be about something that was ultimate.

“The kind of ultimacy of religious life brought me here.” She was drawn to the lifestyle and wanted to give her life to God.

She was very happy during her formation years. The camaraderie of her classmates, as well as the music, made those years very enjoyable. Sister Judy says the music “made coming to religious life very full and very beautiful in many ways. And the prayer of course is part of that.”

She fondly recalls the angelic sounds of the beautifully arranged music sung by more than 100 young voices directed by Sister Alphonsus Mary. After Vatican II, the sisters continued to sing beautifully as they “threw over the organ and picked up the guitar.”

Sister Judy began her ministries at St. Charles in Coldwater, Mich., where she taught seventh and eighth grades. From there she taught grades four and five at St. Joseph in Monroe; after the school closed, she stayed to serve in parish ministry. She then went back to St. Charles, serving in parish ministry before becoming the liturgist at St. Martin de Porres Parish in Warren, Mich. During the summers, she completed her master’s degree in liturgy from Notre Dame University.

When Sister Mary Jo Maher asked her to serve in South Africa, Sister Judy had no desire to go, but after attending a retreat, she had a conversion, what she describes as “a call within a call.”

After two years of preparation, she went to South Africa, where she ministered at St. Joseph Parish in Howick and collaborated with the Redemptorists in the formation of their priests. For 19 years, she taught seminarians at St. Joseph Theological Institute. During that time, Sister Judy earned her doctorate in spirituality at the University of South Africa where she taught before serving at the newly established St. Augustine College in Johannesburg, her ministry for nine years. Currently, she is the acting head of the Theology Department. Along with her administrative duties and teaching responsibilities, she is helping to re-establish the undergraduate programs cut in 2009.

Sister Judy feels very fortunate to have always lived in community. She enjoys praying with other sisters every morning, enjoys their company and is grateful for their support. She never imagined that she would be living in South Africa. “It is only because of the community and the vision of women who called us to something we never could have imagined on our own,” she says.
Sister Mary (Marie Thoma) Downey was introduced to the IHM Sisters in first grade at St. Martin in Detroit, and during her sophomore year in high school, they began to suggest she consider a religious life. She began to seriously think about it when she was a junior in high school. Her parents were very supportive of her decision, but her father’s unexpected death later that school year had a powerful impact on her life.

“I was angry at God and said ‘forget it. I’m not joining,’” Sister Mary recalls. She felt that way for quite a while, but after expressing her anger to some very kind sisters and getting encouragement from her mother, she joined the IHM community. Sister Mary credits the guidance and wisdom of Sister Margaret (Benedicta) Brennan with helping her get through some challenging times during novitiate. When she became frustrated with a situation and wanted to leave at one point, Sister Margaret calmly directed her to pray, and together they rectified the situation.

Sister Mary did her student teaching in the third and fourth grades at Holy Redeemer in Detroit. After graduation, she taught second grade at Holy Trinity (Detroit) and took classes in speech and communication in the master’s program at Wayne State University.

She went on to teach junior high at St. Vincent de Paul (Detroit) and then ministered as the religious education director at St. Blase (Sterling Heights, Mich.). She served at St. Mary in Royal Oak, Mich., where she was religious education director for nine years and then pastoral associate for another six. Sister Mary also ministered as the pastoral associate at St. Albert the Great in Dearborn Heights, Mich., for three years.

At that point, she wanted to concentrate on one area of ministry. She attended Madonna University and took classes in gerontology and then took a sabbatical while caring for a very close friend. After four months, Sister Mary took a job at the Henry Ford Retirement Community in Dearborn, Mich., where she’s ministered for the last 15 years.

She has learned so much from the struggles of the people to and with whom she ministers. “I think it lets me look into my future in a way,” she observes. “They give me an example; I learn from their wisdom.” She feels it has been a privilege to have had so many people share their lives with her and trust her.

When Sister Mary reflects on the IHM community, she says, “We don’t know what the future of the community is, but we feel it is something we can live into it together.”

The community has afforded her opportunities to find her “personal relationship with God and how that relationship with God is lived out in our relationships with others. [The community] has always wanted us to consider our talents and how to use them where we felt we could make a difference.”
Sister Carrine Etheridge was born in Virginia and was educated by the Holy Cross Sisters in grade school. The Philadelphia IHMs taught her in high school. Getting to know them inspired her to join them. The calling to a religious vocation “was like a toothache,” Sister Carrine says, “it just wouldn’t go away.”

One week after being accepted to the IHM community, she received a scholarship to a college she had wanted to attend. Sister Carrine had to ask herself if she was really committed to joining. With the thought that “a promise is a promise,” she went off to the community. “It was a good fit. And the toothache went away.”

Sister Carrine taught in Virginia Beach and then in Lynchburg, Va. She returned to Philadelphia to complete her degree in English and theology and then taught in a variety of schools in Pennsylvania, Connecticut and New Jersey. Being a vowed religious allowed her to “touch people at a deep level. They trust you right away; they know you’ve given your life to them.”

During the summers, Sister Carrine worked toward her master’s degree in English from Villanova University. And then, she says, “I began to feel like my coat was too small.” She realized she was better suited to the Monroe IHM community. After a year of discernment, she transferred.

“I feel like being a transfer sister, there was so much. It’s such a rich life, that it takes two communities.” Sister Carrine realized the fullness of Vatican II when she arrived in Monroe. “It was liberating, a breath of fresh air.” She continued her teaching ministry, first at St. Patrick (Carleton, Mich.) and then at Marian High School (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.) while she finished a master’s degree in music. She received a scholarship and a fellowship to Loyola University and completed her master’s degree in pastoral studies.

From there, she ministered as a rector at Notre Dame while completing her doctorate in pastoral ministry in a joint program with Oxford University. At Notre Dame, she was a facilitator for the sabbatical program for nuns and priests and was also the associate director for the seminary program.

To be closer to her aging mother, she left Notre Dame after 19 years to minister at a small parish in Louisa County, Va., and moved her mom to an assisted living facility nearby. Sister Carrine had only five months with her mother before she died, but “they were five good months.” She remains at the parish because “the need is great, and as Louis Gillet said, ‘Where one is we all are.’” She enjoys having the opportunity to do everything needed in a small parish and to work with such a diverse group of people.

Sister Carrine’s greatest joy since joining the community “is seeing that even though we are separate IHM communities (Monroe, Philadelphia and Scranton), there is a bond, a charism, a community spirit.”
As a student at St. Thomas in Ann Arbor, Sister Mary Katherine (Michael Andrew) Hamilton observed the connection the IHM Sisters had with their students, their authenticity and accessibility. She attended vocation and retreat days in high school, outwardly denying her call to a religious vocation, but internally, the idea was percolating.

“I think I just sort of knew by my sophomore year,” she says. Sister Mary Katherine entered the community right after high school. (But just in case she ever wanted to leave the community, she and her mother agreed that all she had to do was write “how’s Bob?” at the bottom of her letters, and her mother would come immediately to take her home.) During a family visit, her mother thought she looked too thin and talked with Sister Margaret (Benedicta) Brennan about it. After that, Sister Mary Katherine had a chocolate milkshake each night.

Vatican II brought many opportunities, and Sister Mary Katherine was thrilled with them. She admired the women at the forefront of the changes, as well as those challenging the status quo. “We were reminded that we joined a community, we did not come to start one, but we thought we could reshape it,” she notes.

Her first ministry as an IHM was teaching at St. Regis in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., followed by Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill. From there she went to St. Bede in Southfield, Mich. Sister Mary Katherine enjoyed teaching junior high students because she says, “I’m a junior-higher at heart.”

She left Michigan for Wyoming to minister as the director of teachers’ aides at St. Stephen’s Mission on the Wind River Reservation. After two years, she went to Gustine, Calif., to become principal and help re-open the parish elementary school. While in California, she began work on her doctorate in educational administration at the University of San Francisco.

After completing her dissertation, Sister Mary Katherine became an assistant professor in educational leadership at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. She later became the chairperson of the department and director of the Murray Institute, an institute established to which helped Catholic school teachers complete their master’s degrees.

Sister Mary Katherine was elected to the 2000-2006 IHM Leadership Council. After her term of office, she took a year off from ministry and created her own sabbatical year. She currently serves as an associate professor of Education at Marygrove College.

Her greatest joy since joining the community has been “just living. “The community has gifted me with great, great opportunities. The journey I felt I wanted to make, I needed to make with others who were on the same journey.”

“What is the dream of God for you?”
Sister Vita (Vita Marie) Pierce was taught by IHM Sisters at St. Gregory in Detroit. She laughs as she recalls her first experience with the sisters. "I had a rough time with them in the beginning, and they didn’t think I was too wonderful,” she recalls. When she failed first grade, her mother put her into the public school. After two weeks in first grade in public school, she was moved up to second grade. During fourth grade, her mother was convinced she needed to send Vita back to St. Gregory to save her soul.

After graduating from St. Gregory, Sister Vita looked into entering different religious congregations. Her mother encouraged her to attend college before joining a community. She wanted to attend Marygrove, but her mother insisted she get some distance from the IHMs, so she attended the University of Detroit.

After a year, Sister Vita joined the IHM community. The wonderful IHMs she met in high school allowed her to see the love of prayer and service. "They laughed. They had fun together. And they were respectful of their students and of each other. They weren’t dour. They were happy.” She also felt called to the IHMs because she “thought they were holy. This was a way to holiness, a way to union with God. That’s what I wanted.”

During her postulancy, Sister Vita says she tried “to be aware of who I am and what I was doing in this very large picture, this very large place. And not feeling all that secure.”

She laughs when she remembers becoming a novice and thinking, “I have arrived!” The novitiate taught her the reasons why things were done.

Following her student teaching, Sister Vita taught in Mobile, Ala., and then went to Puerto Rico to teach. She had taken Spanish classes in preparation for her assignment and became fluent while attending the University of Puerto Rico. She also ministered at a day center helping women finish their GEDs. When she returned to Detroit, she earned a doctorate in clinical psychology from Wayne State University.

Sister Vita has been ministering as a psychologist at Henry Ford Wyandotte Hospital (formerly called Wyandotte General Hospital) for 33 years and had a private practice for 25 years. “All my life, I’ve loved people telling me their stories,” she says. “Here was a ministry where I would get paid for it!”

Sister Vita has many fond memories of her life in the IHM community, including becoming a cosmetologist with the intent of assisting other sisters make the transition from wearing a habit to wearing secular clothing and maintaining a modern hairstyle. She would like the community to know, “How grateful I am for all those visionaries who have gone before and all their good works. And for accepting me as a member.”

“Vatican II opened up that we are all holy. No one state is better than any other. What makes it better is its Goodness of Fit.”
Sister Gloria Rivera was born in Mexico. Women religious served people, but they were segregated from society.

While attending college in the United States, she became drawn to a life of serving others and the Church. Her goal was to return to her homeland to teach and serve children and the poor.

She began her religious life with the Sisters of Mercy from Iowa. “It was an attractive lifestyle,” Sister Gloria says about her decision to become a sister. “And the truth is, the reasons we come are not the reasons we stay.”

She met three IHMs at a conference in Mexico, and two years later, she moved to Detroit to become further acquainted with the community.

The IHM Sisters’ long history of commitment to justice compelled her to transfer to the IHM community. After she transferred, she became involved with every sustainability effort available. The issues of justice and environment have always been important to her; she saw where the two were becoming the same issue and the IHM community provided her with the opportunity to take action.

She ministered at Groundwork for a Just World, providing education and action on women’s issues, peace, environment and education. This was followed by a position at Proyecto Ayuda – Project Help – that provided older adults with minimum-wage jobs in nonprofit organizations. From there, she became the executive director of Freedom House, which provides comprehensive services for asylum-seekers, and then ministered at the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, planning educational events and providing opportunities to highlight human rights issues.

Since 2005, Sister Gloria has been involved with Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit (GLBD), a network site for the national Bioneers conference. (Bioneers is a national organization combining the environment and social justice movements into one movement. Its annual national conference highlights current issues within the movements.) From 2005-2009, GLBD’s task was to serve as a network for the national conference for those in the Detroit area, but now, it also provides services year-round.

“As long as I am learning and growing in the midst of a community, then there are places to explore,” Sister Gloria says. “Places where we are finding new ways of doing things or new things that need to be done. As long as that’s present in the work I do, I am fine.”

Her greatest joy since transferring to the community has been, “when we made a commitment to leave a legacy of sustainability. It fit with what I felt I was being called to do. As a member of a religious community, I have had a lot of opportunities to be enriched and therefore a responsibility to share what I have been given with others.

“We live in a time of great promise and great peril. Dedicated to the liberating mission of Jesus, we need to be fearless. This is the lifestyle that allows for the search for God in community and the search for justice.”

“We need to be risk-takers.”
Sister Margaret (Margarita) Schmidt grew up in Des Plaines, Ill., and attended St. Patrick Academy. She was introduced to the IHM Sisters at the Summer School of Catholic Action in Chicago.

The Mercy Sisters taught her in high school. After working several years to earn money for college, she attended Marygrove and completed her bachelor’s degree in economics.

She joined the IHM congregation after graduation. Joining was, for Sister Peggy, “the fullest response to God. I felt like I was being invited by God. It was more than just a voice – it was a strong intuition.” She desired to encourage others in their relationship with God.

Sister Peggy ministered in the Reading Clinic while she was a postulant, and as a novice and first year scholastic, taught at St. Mary Academy. Then she taught at Marian High School. She moved back to the Chicago area because of her ailing father and taught at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill. After a year, she attended Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where she received a Master of Arts in religious education.

Sister Peggy headed back to Marian, first as a teacher and then as assistant principal. This was post-Vatican II, and she loved the changes.

“We were ready for this,” she notes. “We were there to be with people, not to be apart or on a pedestal. Our habits had signaled so clearly a separate kind of lifestyle.”

After Marian, Sister Peggy ministered in the IHM Social Justice Office and became involved with the women’s movement and the first meetings about women’s ordination. This was followed by ministry at the Archdiocese of Detroit as an assistant vicar for parishes to Bishop Thomas Gumbleton. She worked with parish councils and the formation of parish leadership.

From there she served in Madison, Wis., as the director of diocesan education. During a sabbatical in Toronto, she attended the Spiritual Integration Program while completing a master’s degree in theology. She also took courses to become a spiritual director and participated in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises Institute in Guelph, Ont.

“We know our own experience of God,” she says. “Spiritual direction invites people to pay attention and to listen.”

She served as spiritual director at Colombiere in Clarkston, Mich., before ministering as director of formation at parishes in Aurora, Ill., and Milwaukee. She then became the coordinator of the Visitation House of Prayer for the next nine years. After a sabbatical year, she continued to direct retreats and co-developed the IHM Events Planning office.

Sister Peggy’s greatest joy since joining the community is “the ongoing sense of life. The richness of always being open to what’s happening and where is God moving.” She is “ever grateful for the opportunities, the care and support within community for the continuing unfolding of herself.”
Sister Marita-Constance Supan was born in Norfolk, Va., and was received into the Philadelphia IHM community in 1964.

Sister Connie's ministerial life began as a seventh-grade teacher in Arlington, Va. She served at schools in Virginia Beach; Trenton, N.J.; Philadelphia; and Savannah before becoming an immigration counselor for Catholic Social Services in Philadelphia and later, as a spirituality/prayer minister.

“As a Philadelphia IHM, I enjoyed teaching religious education (and quite a few other subjects) to elementary, junior high and high school students,” Sister Connie says. “I also had the privilege of exploring our faith and prayer life with adults and catechists.”

In 1985, she transferred from Philadelphia to the Monroe IHM community and was incorporated in 1989. She served as campus minister at Macomb Community College before ministering at St. Joseph Parish in Monroe as the director of religious education.

“I was touched by the vibrancy and warmth [at St. Joseph],” she notes. “I believe that the good news of God’s love for us is the most exciting news around, and I looked forward to sharing that news.”

After two years at St. Joseph, Sister Connie spent three years in adult education at the Monroe County Jail before becoming the executive director at the Women’s and Children’s Sanctuary in Detroit.

She returned to school and earned her PsyS (specialist degree in psychology) from the Center for Humanistic Studies in Detroit and continued her studies through the Union Institute in Cincinnati where she earned a PhD in clinical psychology.

She did her counseling internship at Gateway Counseling Center and served as a therapist at Gateway for 12 years.

Sister Connie was instrumental in securing grant money for a “therapeutic skills for mothers” program. Designed for mothers coping with multiple stressors and whose children were already receiving play therapy at Gateway, the program provided individualized parenting skills and support. During these years, she also created a one-woman show, which brought IHM co-founder Mother Theresa Maxis vividly to life.

Sister Connie now ministers as a writer and as a neighborhood volunteer.