Sister Kathy Onderbeke, IHM, wears two different ministry hats. She's the director of faith formation at St. Louis Catholic Community in Clinton Township, Mich., a full-time job in a parish of more than 900 families.

She is also a graphic designer, serving both the St. Louis and the IHM communities on a part-time basis.

"I had been attending liturgy at St. Louis and had just finished my graphic design degree when the parish received word that a transition would begin with a neighboring parish," Sister Kathy recalls. "I knew this would increase the pastoral needs, so I offered to help while I looked for work."

"The pastor asked if I could do Christian formation. When I said yes, he told me to get him my resume. I'm now in my fourth year at St. Louis."

Sister Kathy's design ministry has involved creating logos, clip art and custom programs for St. Louis, as well as flyers, displays, brochures and ads for the IHM Sisters.

"I like the energy and creativity design projects allow," she says.

Her time management skills and the flexibility of both the parish and the IHM community allow the unusual arrangement to work.

Sister Kathy's parish responsibilities include being part of a three-person pastoral team in addition to developing and implementing faith formation programs.

"It's a typical parish structure where you do what needs to be done," she laughs.

Her ministry gives her the opportunity to work with people of all ages, something she truly enjoys. She works with children, adults and those wishing to become Catholic in the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program.

"I love the balance of working with different age groups," she says. "Each generation has its own gifts and challenges; it's all about making the most of them. One of my favorite aspects of the ministry is accepting where people are and finding ways to engage them in their faith development."

Parishioners have told Sister Kathy that she has a gift for making children feel comfortable.
"I don't expect kids to behave like mini-adults," Sister Kathy explains. "But I do look for activities that draw them into their faith and engage them in the life of the community.

"For instance, Christopher, age 2, helps me open the church doors and puts the stoppers down. Thomas, age 3, helps me greet people. Recently, he showed a little 2-year-old how you get the water ready to 'do the dishes,' telling her that when she gets big like him, she'll be able to help too.

"They're involved with their faith community and enjoying themselves," Sister Kathy continues. "Along the way, they learn not only about their faith, but also that they matter and belong.

"It's not about the tasks we do, but about the relationships we build."