



Sister Janet Lemon was walking through the hallways at St. Frederick School in Pontiac, Mich., when she felt the call to join the IHMs. While walking, she came upon a large poster with Christ pointing directly at her with the words “I WANT YOU,” printed in bold.

“I took it personally, but then I thought, ‘I’m not ready yet. If I become religious, I will be living in community and need to have good relationships with others.’” So she made a bargain with God and said, “If I could make some good friends, then it’s a sign that God really wants me.” Shortly thereafter, she made four good friends who were her constant companions

throughout high school.

She kept busy in the high school band playing piccolo and the flute, and in her senior year she played the organ on Sundays for the girls’ choir. Sister Frances Riley, IHM, was Janet’s mentor during her senior year and since God had kept up his side of the bargain and blessed Janet with good friends, Janet told her friends and family of her decision to become an IHM. A decision that was greeted with mixed emotions.



Janet was born and raised in Pontiac, the only girl and the third of four children to parents, Lucille and Charles Lemon, or Lucy and Chuck as they were known to friends and family. Janet’s two older brothers, Duane and Gene were serving in Korea and her younger brother, Ronald, was still in school when she informed her parents of her decision to become an IHM. Her mother was devastated. She had such a difficult time accepting the news that a third child was soon to leave the nest that she told Janet that she promised she would not write to her while she was gone; a promise that she kept for an entire year. She did, however, visit Janet during the first year and her dad wrote to her often.

Sister Janet spent half her working career, 24 years, as a teacher. “I tell my nieces and nephews that I was in first grade for nine years,” Janet jokes. She taught a number of grades but found third grade to be most rewarding. “I loved third grade the most. They are still children but quite independent and eager to learn,” she recalls.

The next 24 years were spent in elder care. “I spent nine years in the physical therapy department at the Motherhouse working as an aide. I discovered that I really liked working with older adults.” This resulted in Sister Janet returning to



school where she took classes to help her work with the elderly. She went on to work at Detroit-area retirement centers and then worked at a literacy center for three years, where she taught adult literacy. She particularly liked it when she took care of the elderly in their homes. "I liked that a lot. I did that from 2007 until retirement."

Retiring to the Motherhouse in 2011, Sister Janet's calendar is always full as she spends time practicing her music and helping out wherever she can.

"Music is a great part of my life. I always liked pianos and my dad finally got me one when I was 13." Sister Janet plays the piano recreationally and has also learned to play the recorder (wooden). She is a member of the IHM bell ringers and has no less than 11 responsibilities at the Motherhouse at any given time as she actively supports other departments. "I'm busier now than before retirement," she laughs.



Still, she does find time to enjoy a daily walk around the campus and to swim laps at the YMCA once a week. "I like doing exercise. I like being physical. I'm a doer," she explains. She is also an avid reader and has read all of the books written by Mary Higgins Clark. "I read murder mysteries, historical novels and biographies."

Sister Janet loves to travel. In recent years, she has ventured out across U.S. with travel companions, Sisters Agnes Anderson and Roberta Richmond. She also enjoys visiting her brother Gene, her only surviving sibling. He lives in Battle Creek and Sister Janet makes time to visit her brother three times a year.