



IHM Sisters Then & Now

August 2014



Sister Sharon Defever first heard the call when she was a little girl, impressed with the IHM Sisters who taught her. She talked to her parents about joining the convent when she graduated from high school; they insisted she go to college. She attended Marygrove and her admiration for the IHMs deepened. She knew she wanted to join the community.

"I just made up my mind. My parents didn't initially like my decision, but I was 22 years old at that point," she says.

Sister Sharon's first experience in the classroom was student teaching at St. Mary Academy and also teaching second grade at St. Joseph in Monroe.

"I had no idea what it was like to work with little ones, but I learned you have to repeat and repeat and repeat," she laughs. She taught third and fourth grade at St. Mary in Monroe and fourth grade at St. Thomas in Ann Arbor.

Sister Sharon notes that a teacher must keep the discipline. "You don't have to be mean, but you have to be stern. I know I had trouble being stern..."

Sister Sharon left Michigan for Mobile, Ala., to teach at Saint Monica School.

"I taught grade school for a long time. When the school closed, I took Clinical Pastoral Education courses at Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, Fla., and then I got certified by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains."

Her second ministry, as a hospice chaplain, began. She visited patients, usually in their homes, remaining present and listening and lending as much support as possible. She touched her patients' lives, and they touched hers.

She recently received a call from a former patient's wife. Sister Sharon was working with a hospitalized young man when she found out he was this woman's grandson. The woman called to thank her and let her know how much her support in getting through such a



difficult experience had meant to her. Sister Sharon hadn't realized how much she had touched the woman and her family but knew the woman had touched her. "She was a blessing; I learned from her."

After 12 ½ years as a hospice chaplain, Sister Sharon began her third and current ministry as a chaplain at Providence Hospital in Mobile. She works with families of sick babies and patients in the terminal-care area, listening carefully to understand their needs. She relies on scriptures to help bring some comfort and strength. She also works with staff and holds a gathering for prayer every morning.

The experiences Sister Sharon has had since she joined the IHM community have far exceeded her expectations. "I thought I would probably stay around Detroit and teach and that would be it. Never had any idea I'd do what I do today!"

