



From left: Sister Frances Ryan, John Ryan, mother (Frances), father (John) and Sister Mary Agnes Ryan

Sister Mary Agnes Ryan grew up in Livonia. Her mother came to the United States from Ireland and her father was an Irish immigrant from Canada. She and her sister attended St. Michael in Livonia until she was in the fourth grade when the two girls transferred to Epiphany grade school in Detroit. Their brother followed later, commuting from Livonia with their father on his way to work.

Her first sense of a calling to religious life came when she was in the fifth grade. (At that time, she decided to form her own missionary community.) She has since realized she joined the community because of her parents' influence.

"My parents were the kind of people who really *lived*" she says. "They didn't talk about it. They were good people. I saw joyful people and I saw purposeful people." Their generosity and compassionate nature impacted Sister Mary Agnes' decision to join the community. In addition, she wanted something meaningful in her life and she had had wonderful relationships with the IHM Sisters, one being her aunt.

Sister Mary Agnes attended St. Cecilia High School in Detroit, and joined the IHM community after high school graduation.

She began her ministries at Queen of Hope, a satellite school of St. Mary of Redford. For nine years Sister Mary Agnes taught grades four, six and seven before going to Immaculata where she taught English for four years. Her time at Immaculata coincided with the civil unrest in Detroit and the Detroit Tigers' World Series victory. These episodes, along with the changes of Vatican II, influenced her greatly and provided a wonderful learning experience.

Following her time at Immaculata, Sister Mary Agnes was elected as co-provincial to the Southwest Province of the IHM Sisters. During the third year of her four-year term, she went to Rome for nine months as part of a group of international sisters.

She completed her master's degree in marriage and family counseling at the University of Detroit while ministering part time for a year with the Archdiocese of Detroit - Family Life Bureau. This was followed by 10 years at Catholic Social Services in Wayne County and three years at Center for Humanistic Studies and Northland Clinic. Sister Mary Agnes completed her doctorate in clinical psychology at the Union Institute in Cincinnati while working part time as a psychotherapist and was then elected to the

IHM Leadership Council. After six years she returned to her ministry as a clinical psychologist.

The greatest joy Sister Mary Agnes has experienced since joining the community "is making a difference in people's lives." She is most grateful for "the opportunity for growth on level of my being and the expectation that I won't stop growing until I'm gone."

