

Sister Ellen, the second child of Ann Marie and Alfred Rinke, grew up in a family of eight children in Warren, Mich., living by her grandparents' Centennial Holstein Farm. Her parents valued a Catholic education, making sacrifices to send their children to Catholic schools. She attended St. Anne Grade School in Warren, and Marian High School in Bloomfield Hills. During her school years, Sister Ellen met the IHM Sisters.



Sister Ellen states, "The most precious gift I received from the IHM Sisters was the cultivation of a personal relationship with God." In seventh grade she was taught how to pray to God as a loving friend, as someone who loved her unconditionally. When walking home from school one day, she experienced God's tender love for her and desired to respond in love with the gift of her life. It was during this experience that she wanted to become an IHM, joining others who also loved God and desired a life of loving service.

On Sept. 10, 1966, Sister Ellen entered the IHM congregation as a postulant. During this period after the Second Vatican Council, religious life in the Church was in the process of renewal, and the congregation moved through challenging years. Sister Ellen treasures her IHM formation years as she deepened her discipleship. Amid the culture of women religious embracing their founding charism, Sister Ellen was inspired by the many IHM gatherings when Sister Margaret Brennen shared her insight and experiences of women religious in the United States embracing those renewal years.

In 1971, Sister Ellen graduated from the University of Detroit. In 1981, after some experience in parish ministry, she completed a Master of Divinity degree at SS. Cyril & Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Mich. After six years of IHM vocation and formation ministry, she moved to New York to attend New York University. In 1991, she completed a master's degree in clinical social work and then moved to Chicago, where she ministered as a therapist at a women's shelter and at Mercy Home for Boys and Girls. After three years, she became an outpatient therapist at Blue Water Mental Health Clinic, Fort Gratiot, Mich. In 2003, she discerned a call to serve the Church more visibly, and moved into parish administration, ministering at several parishes in the Diocese of Saginaw. In 2011, Bishop Cistone invited her to be the pastoral administrator at St. Frances Cabrini Church in Vassar, Mich. Currently, Sister Ellen serves on the 2018-2024 Leadership Council as a mission councilor.



Sister Ellen says her life has been flooded with grace and blessing. Her greatest joy and challenge has been "learning to listen and to respond to the Holy Spirit." She delights in moving with God and also in helping others to experience that invitation. Sister Ellen has been filled with gratitude for the gift of her religious vocation, and she is humbled by God's mercy.