



Sister Betty Leon was born in Detroit and has an older and a younger brother. She attended an IHM grade school and then Immaculata High School. “I have been with the IHMs since I was six years old!” She took piano lessons from IHM Sisters as well; music and dancing have always been a part of her life.

The IHM Sisters were inspiring, especially her eighth grade teacher, Sister Margaret Sullivan (who celebrates her 85th Jubilee in 2018). “Sister Margaret was very influential to me,” Sister Betty recalls. “She was strong and gentle and kind and caring. She was such a good person.”

Sister Betty taught at St. Thomas Aquinas in Detroit; St. Charles, Coldwater; and Marian High School, Bloomfield Hills. During her summers, she studied at Boston College and completed her master’s degree in English. She then went to teach at St. Pius High School in Atlanta; she enjoyed living in the south. During that time, she completed a term of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as a transition from teaching to pastoral ministry.

She started her pastoral work at SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Decatur, Ga. “It was the time of the changes in the Church,” she notes, and Sister Betty enjoyed developing different programs at her parish. She then went to work at three rural parishes in Oklahoma where she worked with 200 families. After a year renewal, she worked at a parish in suburban Oklahoma before being elected to the Southwest provincial team. “That was a great experience,” she recalls. “I got to know people I would never have known.”

Once her term was completed, Sister Betty took a two-year program of CPE and Marriage and Family Therapy. That led to work at a Tulsa, Okla., parish counseling center while she completed her master’s degree in social work. After 10 years, she returned to Michigan to be near her elderly mother. She worked part time in both counseling and as pastoral associate at Sacred Heart Parish in Grosse Ile, Mich. She interned in spiritual direction and currently offers spirituality programs and spiritual direction.

Sister Betty is most grateful that the congregation accepted her from the beginning. “The congregation has given me models, mentors, friends and sisters,” she says. She is also grateful for all her education, which she calls “an ongoing gifting.” Her ministries have called her to serve in ways beyond the expected. Challenges to her skills led to further educational preparation.

The high points of Sister Betty’s life have been her annual retreats. “I’m quite an extrovert,” she laughs, “so what this does is help me to refocus, to center, to reclaim God’s ever-





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present energy and care.” The retreats provide time to just listen and find “that something inside that can be freed up. That is a real blessing.”