

Reflection Questions for Chapter 1 of Building Sisterhood

Peggy Thompson, IHM Associate, and Nancy Sylvester, IHM

1. As we discuss the “IHM DNA”, the Motherhouse Chronicles for January 1848 might give us something to consider. It lists the following five attributes as central to the IHMs’ traditional discernment process: Interior responses to unfolding events and needs, Prayer with the expectation of Divine guidance, Further discernment with trusted companions, Communication with authority, and Immediate execution. [page 45] Do any or all of these resonate with you as part of the Congregation’s DNA? Can you identify them as having been present in your own IHM experience? Are there any implications for the future?
2. Submission to clericalism was quite characteristic of the congregation during its first century. This seemed to go beyond communication with authority as part of the discernment process. Do you believe this tension between obedience to authority and obedience to individual/congregational discernment has continued in the second century of IHM life? Are there any implications for us in terms of shaping the future of religious life?
3. Supan names this chapter “Dangerous Memories.” What does that mean for you? How did not acknowledging Theresa's racial identity affect how IHMs have understood who we are? To what extent do you think this has been resolved—and what work do you identify as remaining to be done? How does this shape our ongoing congregational life as we move forward into a multicultural future?
4. As you reflect upon Chapter 1, what is most meaningful to you about the IHM “origin story”? What do you find most surprising? What do you find painful to work through? What are you most grateful for, and what do you want to ponder as you experience this 175th anniversary commemoration?