

Sister Marianne Gaynor, born to an Irish mother and Polish father, grew up on the northwest side of Detroit along with her younger sister and brother. Having immigrant grandparents created an awareness and concern for people from other countries. “We always had pen-pals, cousins from Ireland,” she says.



She attended Marygrove Preschool and Kindergarten, Christ the King Elementary School and Immaculata High School, taught by the IHM Sisters. Sister Marianne joined the community after high school.

“For me, it was the IHM sisters I met. They were significant because of what they stood for and how they engaged with us. They were just really good people.” She was attracted to the IHM Sisters’ commitment to service and felt called to a religious vocation. She earned her bachelor’s degree in theology and early childhood education from Marygrove.

Sister Marianne started her ministry establishing the preschool and teaching Child Development at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill. She went on to teach at St. Matthew in Detroit while completing her master’s degree in early childhood education at Oakland University. (She enjoyed her students so much that she became their Brownie leader.)

After six years, she taught in Kirkwood, Mo., before ministering as a pastoral associate at Our Lady Queen of Hope in Detroit for five years. “This was a pivotal ministry for me, raising my consciousness about injustice, especially around feminist issues,” she recalls.

The parishioners were very involved in their local community. Sister Marianne explains, “What we did during the week, we celebrated on Sunday.” She felt close to the parishioners and knew that they worked well together. “I felt I was with them instead of leading them,” she says. “I felt we did it together.”

Sister Marianne then became a massage therapist, ministering at the Human Potential Center in Monroe and various counseling and chiropractic offices in Oakland County. She also provided massage for the sisters in the Motherhouse Memory Care Unit and Visitation retreatants. After 12 years, she began working at the IHM Development Office, managing the database for fundraising activities, including the capital campaign for the sustainable renovation of the Motherhouse. She then took a sabbatical and experienced a vision quest on Long Island Sound before traveling to Prague and Poland with GATE (Global Awareness Through Experience). During her travels abroad, she met her grandfather’s homestead in Poland and met relatives.



When she returned home, Sister Marianne worked at Marygrove in the Alumni Office as the event and annual giving manager. She then ministered as a public guardian for nine years at Compassionate Companions in Wayne, Monroe and Macomb counties. She left Compassionate Companions for her role on the Leadership Council as mission councilor/vice president.

Many experiences have given her joy since joining the community, but mostly it came from the people she has met along the way. Forever grateful for the IHM community and the people she has encountered in her ministries. She remains inspired by poetry and aspires to “live in harmony with each other and the Earth.”