

IHM Chapter Direction – Exploration into Spirituality



Movement 1

A Guidebook

February – June 2021

Welcome

In opening this book, you have begun your – and our – adventure into spirituality. Though you have written and lived many chapters prior to this moment, our IHM Chapter Direction calls us to an exploration of our own spirituality and of our communal experience of spirituality as an IHM community. This call includes all our foremothers, the women and men who have gone before us in community and those yet to come, the future that is already being born within each of us.

At Chapter 2018, we proclaimed: “As an IHM community, we believe the Spirit is inviting us to enter more deeply into the liberating mission of Jesus Christ (Luke 4, IHM Constitutions-Chapter One) as we come to understand it anew through the mystery of the Sacred Universe. Our spirituality and our shared humanity compel us to respond collaboratively with others to the challenges of our beautiful

yet fractured world especially through our commitment to social, economic, and ecological justice.”

You have already been doing this through your own life and ministry and in various community experiences. We now take time together – in common – to listen to and explore the Spirit’s invitation to each of us personally and to us as an IHM community.

We invite you to enter into this process with an open heart and to ponder and hold in your heart, the question, “What is the gift to us from this?” Let us hold one another in prayer as we begin.

A Note from the Committee

There is a full English version and a full Spanish version of this guidebook as well as the other pieces of the movement. As a committee, we felt strongly about making this process fully accessible in the two languages used by our community. This allows each of us the chance to go deeply into spirituality in our home language, to grow in our awareness of one another and to think and share in new ways.

A guide to the Guidebook

This is your guidebook. As with any great adventure, it helps to have a guidebook to offer an overview of the process, highlight key aspects of the journey, make connections and provide resources. But it is just that: a guidebook. You have the freedom to wander and explore spirituality in ways that are most intriguing and meaningful to you.

In this guidebook you will find the following:

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As you begin this adventure, you may wish to have a dedicated journal or notebook to jot down your reflections. Be creative! Your “journal” might be a painting canvas or a musical composition or a podcast. Find the medium that allows you to be freely yourself.

I. The Process Overall

The logo

The logo is original fractal art created by Wolfepaw (Peggi Wolfe) in 2015. It is called “The Color Spiral.” She describes it as “a vibrant and colorful fractal spiral.” You can see more of her fractal and digital art at:

<https://www.deviantart.com/wolfepaw/gallery>.

In the context of our exploration into spirituality, “The Color Spiral” offers us a provocative visual image to “hold” the many experiences and expressions of spirituality in our own lives and in our corporate life as an IHM community.



There is movement, lightness and even the hint of feathers, which are symbolic of one’s deep connection to the Sacred. There is a flowing inward and a flowing outward, a centering and a going forth.

We will each see and experience different aspects and feelings in this piece of art and in our sharing, the art will continue to grow in meaning.

***“Hope” is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without / the words, and never stops at all.***

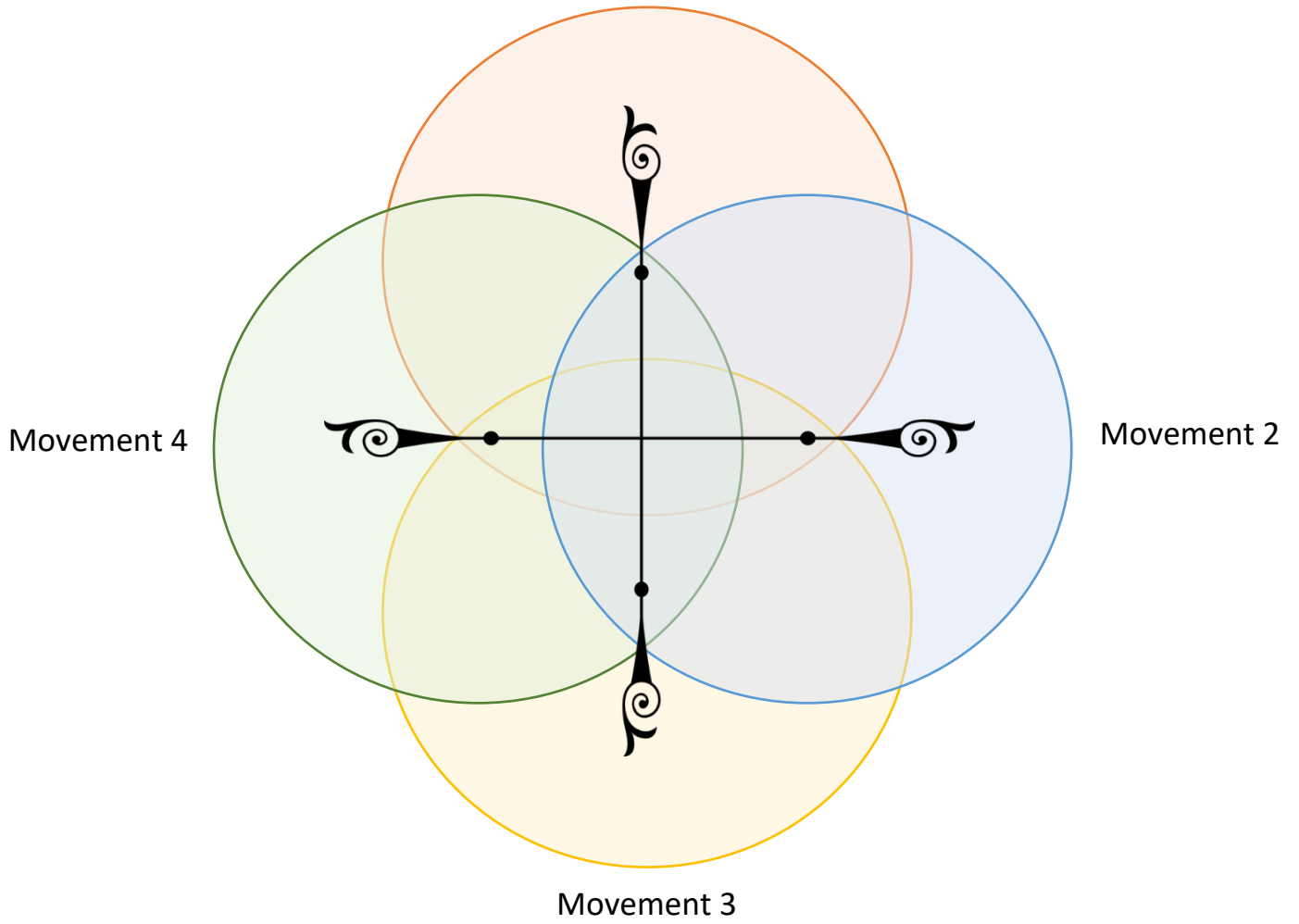
– Emily Dickinson, “Hope is the thing with feathers” in *Selected Poems & Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Robert N. Linscott (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 79.

The process

“IHM Chapter Direction – Exploration into Spirituality” is a process comprised of four movements, distinct yet interrelated, which goes from February 2021 to January 2023. Each movement is six months long. The topics will evolve as we journey through each movement.

Feb. 1, 2021 – July 31, 2021	Movement 1
Aug. 1, 2021 – Jan. 31, 2022	Movement 2
Feb. 1, 2022 – July 31, 2022	Movement 3
Aug. 1, 2021 – Jan. 31, 2023	Movement 4

Movement 1



The term “movement” is borrowed from musical composition and refers to the various self-contained sections within a performance, each of which is essential and builds upon one another for the full realization of the complete work.

Likewise, our movements build upon one another but are self-contained, each devoted to a different but interrelated aspect of our exploration into spirituality. In each movement we ponder, “what is the gift to us from this?” and continue to gather the gifts so that we can see a more complete picture of how the Spirit is moving in our lives personally and as an IHM community called to be women and men of mission.

“Movement” also suggests fluidity, shifting, change, development and transformation. These meanings correspond well with spirituality and also with the process that has been designed.

While the process has a beginning date and an end date, everything that happens in between is up to each person, according to their needs around interest, schedule, energy and other things happening within the six-month period. The guidebook points out the main pieces to tap into, however, it is up to each person to work through it in their own way, on their own timeline.

Where to Go for Help

Help with the Process

Please contact any member of the Direction on Spirituality Committee.

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Help with Accessing Materials

Whether you need help with printed material, digital material or finding things on the IHM website, please contact the Communications Department.

- communications@ihmsisters.org

Help connecting with others

It is important to connect with others during this process to share, pray together and discuss. If you would like help making those connections, consider contacting the following:

- Members of your Governance Circle
- Mission Councilor

- Pastoral Care staff
- People in your local IHM community

Ideas, Suggestions and Feedback

This process of exploration into spirituality is unfolding and evolving. We welcome your ideas, suggestions and feedback on the process. Please contact the members of the Direction on Spirituality Committee using the information above.

II. Entering into the First Movement

The focus of the first movement is our personal exploration into spirituality. Future movements will build upon our experience and learnings of this foundational movement. In this movement, we explore what spirituality means and various approaches to and expressions of spirituality that have been important to us in our own lives.

You are encouraged to begin with the Invitation, followed by the Discovery and then the Engagement. You will also find various ways to connect with others during this movement as well as to integrate with other processes and happenings within the IHM community and beyond.

Invitation

The Invitation to Movement 1 situates itself in the deepest hopes you expressed during the “shaping conversations” this past fall. We found them to be sacred and profound. Our intent is to capture them because they ground the potential for the experience of opening up our Direction on Spirituality. A video of our deepest hopes is presented on the IHM website in the private section under “Highlights / Exploration into Spirituality.” Take your time with this moment of INVITATION to hear yourself, your sisters’ and associates’ deepest hopes.

I began without thinking of the future of the work, leaving it to God alone to bless it and make it prosper if it were pleasing to Him and useful for the good of souls.

– Louis Florent Gillet, CSsR, Letter to the IHM congregation, May 4, 1891.
Quoted in Sister Rosalita Kelly, IHM, *No Greater Service: The History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 1845-1945*, (Detroit, SSIHM, 1948), 753.

Discovery

Discovery is an opportunity to learn together so that we have a common experience and a common constellation of ideas to inform us within the flow of each movement. For Movement 1, we will be using a piece called “Reflections on Spirituality and Religion” by Susan Rakoczy, IHM.

We are offering it in various formats to encourage both personal learning and group learning. It can also be used contemplatively in prayer.

- **The full paper, “Reflections on Spirituality and Religion,” is located below in this Guidebook.**

- The following can be found in “Highlights / Exploration into Spirituality” on the private side of the IHM website.
 - A PowerPoint Presentation with the main points of the paper plus many illustrations can be found on the private side of the IHM website.
 - A Narrated Video using the PowerPoint slides and the full paper read aloud
 - A Contemplative Video using the PowerPoint slides and instrumental music (no voice-over)

Please see the “Ways to Connect” for ideas on how to share this experience with others.

*Affairs are now soul size. The Enterprise
Is exploration into God.*

– Christopher Fry from | de “A Sleep of Prisoners”

(<https://gratefulness.org/resource/a-sleep-of-prisoners/>)

Reflections on Spirituality and Religion

– Susan Rakoczy, IHM

Today it is not unusual to hear people say, “I am spiritual but not religious.” They usually mean that they are on a personal spiritual quest that is not linked to any organized religious body such as Christianity or Buddhism.

“Spirituality” is a very elastic and slippery word. It has as many definitions and descriptions as people who are spiritual seekers. Very broadly, it is a search for meaning in life, often with a desire for the transcendent, a going beyond ordinary experience.

Sandra Schneiders, one of the founders of spirituality as an academic discipline, describes spirituality as “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-

integration through self-transcendence towards the ultimate value one perceives.”¹

Her key points are:

- **“Conscious involvement” —a person creates their spirituality over their life-time and so it develops organically.**
- **“Life integration” —there is no split between spirituality and “life.”**
- **“Self-transcendence” —I am not sufficient of myself. Search and desire are the inner dynamics of spirituality.**
- **“Ultimate value” —What is the “pearl of great price” for which a person would give everything?**

¹ Sandra M Schneiders, IHM, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, edited by Elizabeth A Dreyer and Mark S Burrows (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 5-6.

“Religion” comes from the Latin *religio*, which means to “bind together.” Healthy religion enables people and communities to integrate all dimensions of their lives. A specific religion can be spoken of in the language of “creed” (what I/we believe), “code” (ethics) and “cult” (communal ritual, personal prayer and meditation).

It is certainly true that many people reject any connection between spirituality and a religious tradition. However, religion can be a solid anchor for one’s spirituality because of its history and tradition. Thus, we can speak of Christian spirituality, Jewish spirituality, Islamic spirituality and others. Christian spirituality is very diverse including Benedictine, Franciscan, Dominican, Ignatian and Alphonsian traditions. Contemporary spirituality also includes feminist spirituality, eco-spirituality, and Black spirituality amongst others.

For each person, their spirituality is the flavor and texture of their search for the sacred. It evolves and grows from the unique life-journey of a person. In *Building Sisterhood*, Margaret Brennan wrote, “It is my growing conviction that the diversity of spiritualities operative in a congregation where ‘not two are exactly alike’ does not take away from the spirit that bonds us so closely to one another in the common history and heritage we share.”²

Spirituality is therefore also communal as a shared journey since as human beings we are social to our core. People can help us on our spiritual journey and forms of community—informal or more structured—provide opportunities for growth towards “our ultimate value.”

We can participate in a broader institutional spiritual tradition such as Christianity with a rich history from the

² Margaret Brennan IHM, “Not Two Exactly Alike,” in *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 109

desert mothers to great mystics including Teresa of Avila and advocates for social justice such as Dorothy Day. Although this tradition has been dominated by male voices, in our time women strongly and clearly proclaim the truth of their spiritual searching.³

As IHMs, we share the Christian spiritual heritage—abundant and varied. We create our own personal spirituality from the diverse strands of humanity’s search for meaning, for the sacred, adding new textures to the ever-expanding interpretation of what we have received. We are not content with repetition. Newness and freshness are distinctive signs of the Spirit of God.

³ Grace M. Jantzen has analyzed the intricate relationship between women’s spiritual search and the power of patriarchy. See *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Reflection Questions

How do you respond to the statement “I am spiritual but not religious?” To what extent have you experienced the tension in this statement?

Reflect on three themes of your personal spirituality. How did they develop? Who assisted you? How do you live them in practical ways?

What dimensions of spirituality do we hold in common as members of the IHM community?

In what ways are they significant for you?

Engagement

The central engagement activity is to explore your own spiritual journey throughout your life. The activity is guided by a series of questions or topics for reflection. You are encouraged to use your notebook or whatever form of “journal” that you wish to record your experience of this process.

Life Review Process: My Journey In and With the Divine

– Susan Rakoczy, IHM

Introduction

You have probably heard or read that “life is a journey—not a destination.” This is true in the sense that life unfolds in many ways—surprising, disconcerting, peaceful, painful and joyful. This Life Review Process is an invitation to consider the

whole of your life, with an emphasis on how you have experienced God/the Divine and your response.

The Review is divided into 11 reflection themes and a conclusion. You are invited to consider some significant events and their impact on your journey of faith. Our lives contain a multitude of memories—more than can be reflected on in this Review. As memories surface—happy and disturbing—receive them peacefully and let them lead you to deeper insight.

Take some time with each reflection area as you have inner energy. There is no timeline for this review process. Let the Spirit lead you.

The Beginnings

Who am I in my family?

To which family member do I have the closest relationship?

Let a memory surface and hold it peacefully. Pay attention to your feelings.

What is my earliest memory of God/prayer?

Let a memory surface and hold it prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

Growing Up

Where did I attend grade school and high school? What was significant about these years of education? Who was my “favorite” teacher? Why? Let a few memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

How was my relationship with God developing?

Remember an important event and hold it prayerfully.

Pay attention to your feelings.

IHM Vocation

Each of us has a unique journey of faith and as a member of the IHM community, your vocation is central to this journey.

Spend time remembering the first time you thought of IHM life. Who influenced you?

What attracted to you to the IHM community? How did you respond? If you had a difficult time with the call, remember why this was so. How was it resolved? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

Remember your years of formation. Who was important? What was important? What were the challenges? What dimensions of IHM spirituality live deeply in you? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

Remember your reception, profession and covenant days. Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

Prayer and Spirituality

Prayerfully remember the ways of prayer that have shaped your life. Are there saints/significant people who are important to you? Give thanks for them.

How do you pray today?

Who is God for you today?

Select three important experiences of God in your life. Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

***The things of the soul must always be considered
plentiful, spacious, and large.***

—Teresa de Ávila, *Castillo Interior* 1:2:8

Community Life

Remember the communities you have lived in since profession or with whom you have associated. Who were the members? What was enriching? Challenging? What friends did you make? Give thanks for them.

Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

If you have lived singly, why did you make this decision? What has this experience taught you about yourself?

For associates, how has your partner and/or family enriched your experience of community and vice versa? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

Ministry

Beginning with your first experience of ministry, whether you understood it formally or not, prayerfully remember “all down the years” where you were and what you did.

Select three important experiences of ministry. For each, return to where and what you did. Who was important? Why?

Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

The Renewal of Vatican II

The Council's call to a radical renewal of religious life was taken up by the IHM community with great energy and determination—but not without strain and conflict. Whenever you entered the community, this renewal has influenced how you live IHM life today.

If you were an IHM by the late 1960s, what do you remember about these renewal years? What was inviting? What was difficult? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

If you entered the IHM community after 1970, Vatican II language has permeated IHM language. How has this shaped your spirituality? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

A New Century: A Different Vision

The 21st century is different from the 20th in profound ways. Post-modernism is a term sometimes used to describe the ethos of this century. It is defined by skepticism of institutions—government, education and religion. In a positive sense, our current era also includes much religious searching and a pervasive interest in spirituality.

If you entered the IHM community since 1990, what questions did you bring?

How would you describe your search for the sacred? In what ways has the IHM community assisted you? In what ways have you been on your own path? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

If you entered before 1990, in what ways have the shifts in this century inspired new questions or perspectives for

you? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

For all members of the IHM community, this era has marked our focused engagement with feminism and ecological issues. How and when did you develop or deepen a feminist perspective? When and how did ecological issues become significant? Let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

IHM Commitment to Justice and Right Relationships

Commitment to justice and right relationships is part of IHM DNA — when we speak of Luke 4 and the liberating mission of Jesus, this perspective states clearly who we are.

Select three important “awakenings” to justice issues in your life.

For each, let the memories surface and hold them prayerfully. Pay attention to your feelings.

COVID and Systemic Racism

As IHMs, we discern the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel. These “signs” are many and change decade by decade. In late 2019, COVID-19 appeared and it has devastated our world. In light of the murder of George Floyd and other innocent people of color, racism—specifically systemic racism—screams for attention.

COVID-19 is new, very new but with a tremendous death-dealing impact. Reflect and remember the first time you heard of this “novel” virus. How did you respond? How has COVID-19 affected you? What has been your experience of the various degrees of lockdown? Have you been ill? Have family and/or close friends been ill? Has someone close to you died? How has COVID-19 influenced your prayer? Your experience of God’s presence? Hold the memories and the feelings. Bring them to prayer.

If you are a white person, how have you responded to the Black Lives Matter movement? When you hear the phrase “white privilege,” what do you think and feel? Remember an experience of a racist thought or action. Why did you think this or act this way? Remember the feelings and pray in repentance.

If you are a person of color, remember experiences of systemic racism. How did you respond then? Now? Name your feelings and bring them to prayer.

The Future

The future is always unknown. IHMs are planners but much is not under our control. We have all learned this in powerful ways this year as COVID-19 has stalked our world.

Emily Dickinson wrote: “Hope is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul / And sings the tune without the words, / And never stops at all.” What is your image of hope?

You might want to draw or paint or write about it. What feelings does it evoke? Hold them prayerfully.

***The future is dark. But my faith dares me to ask:
What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb,
but the darkness of the womb?***

– Valarie Kaur from <https://valariekaur.com/2016/11/a-sikh-prayer-for-america-on-november-9th-2016/>

Concluding Reflection

What have you learned about your life journey in this reflection process?

What was surprising? Uplifting? Painful?

Give thanks.

III. Expanding Your Experience

Ways to Connect

Spirituality is very personal, but it is not isolated. As spiritual beings, we are in relationship – relationship with God, people and the whole Earth community. You are encouraged to find ways to connect with others during this movement. Below are some ideas to spark your imagination.

Personal and “at home” connections

Here are some ideas for your own personal activity or to engage with those with whom you live.

- Host a candle-lit brunch/luncheon/dinner with a special recipe using this opportunity to share learnings from your early spiritual experiences.**
- Choose an art medium or craft that expresses your spiritual encounters.**
- Experiment with a new medium/craft to identify your personal spirituality.**

- Use a journal to express feelings of connectedness, isolation, frustration, etc.
- Review your spiritual journey reflecting on growth and challenges over time.
- Explore and evaluate your immediate environment – what is present there that speaks to your connection with God?
- What needs to change?
- What could be added?
- What is distracting?

Moving outward

These ideas are for connecting with others in the IHM community beyond your home. Please keep in mind safe distancing as appropriate.

- Join a monthly Zoom conversation with others in the IHM community and facilitated by members of the Direction on Spirituality committee. Time and dates will be announced in the IHM community emails.

- **Connect with others in the IHM community who are from a different culture or have a different language – feel free to ask for translation help.**
- **Write a note to someone – family member, friend, IHM Sister or Associate – inviting continuing dialogue.**
- **Send free greeting cards by email, e.g., 123Greetings.com.**
- **Engage in spiritual listening as you go for a walk or gaze outside and bring your listening into conversation with the themes of this movement.**
- **Engage in spiritual listening with another, give back what you heard, exchange feelings that well up in you as you listen.**
- **Visit with someone by video using Zoom or Google Connect.**
- **Initiate a Self-Organized Group (SOG). Instructions on forming this type of group can be found on the private side of the IHM website.**

- **Make Movement 1 part of Wisdom Circle and Mission Circle gatherings, keeping in mind the energies of all involved.**
- **Keep one another in prayer throughout this movement; we especially ask members of the Blessing Circle to pray for the IHM community.**
- **Sign up for an online retreat opportunity.**
- **Take advantage of online concerts, plays, museum art shows, conferences.**
- **Start a book club encounter online with friends on a mutually chosen topic connected to spirituality.**
- **Enjoying the music, the productions, the beauty, the learnings.**

Making connections in the guidebook

These are ideas related to specific parts of the movement.

Invitation

- **Form a COVID-safe group to use the reflection questions and/or the Deepest Hopes in a discussion.**

Discovery

- **Use the PowerPoint Presentation to focus a group study.**
- **Share other resources you have found helpful in your journey into spirituality – suggest a resource swap.**
- **Watch Kathleen Duffy’s webinar on “Emerging Spirituality in a Chaotic World” found in the Highlights/Exploration into Spirituality section on the private side of the IHM website.**

Engagement

- **Find a notebook, sketch pad, canvas, recorder or other way to “journal” creatively in a medium that is meaningful to you as you go through the Life Process Review.**

- **Reflect with others in the IHM community about their experience, asking what the gift is from this for us.**

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience.

– Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Ways to Integrate

There have been many processes and activities flowing out of our Chapter 2018 Direction. This exploration into spirituality – while its own process – is a way to become more aware of the connections to other congregational processes and activities.

Suggested ways to integrate are as follows:

- **make elements of this process part of the Governance Circles and Coordinating Council’s conversations and prayer;**

- **reflect on the IHM public statements and how spirituality informs our corporate stances on issues such as violence, racism and immigration;**
- **revisit the Chapter 2018 Direction and listen anew to how God is calling you and the IHM community;**
- **find a place of grounding in your spirituality for holding the critical issues that the IHM community is facing including the future use and ownership of the land and buildings located on the Monroe Campus;**
- **search as you journey through the movement for opportunities to see and give voice to connections between the movement and the Chapter Act;**
- **share with inquirers who are interested in the IHM community about spirituality and how the IHM community nourishes your spiritual journey;**
- **explore the spiritual history of our community and our sister communities, the Oblate Sisters of Providence (oblatesisters.com), the IHM Sisters of Immaculata (ihmimmaculata.org), and the IHM Sisters of Scranton**

(sistersofihm.org); visit the website of the four communities at ospihm.org.

A significant way to engage our exploration into spirituality is to attend the Assembly from July 29-30, 2021. Part of the Assembly is dedicated to our exploration into spirituality and sharing with one another.

When the mystic's spiritual eye is opened, their physical eye is closed; they see nothing but God.

– Abu Sulayman Ad-Darani

Learnings

We invite you to reflect on your learnings and those of others throughout this Movement.

1. What is the gift to us from this? In other words, what are some of the gifts that are meaningful for you? In what way are these also gifts to the IHM community and the world?

- What was new?**
- What built on what you already knew?**
- What was surprising?**
- What moved your heart?**
- What spurs you to action?**

2. As you look back on the experience of Movement 1, what do you carry with you into the second movement in which we will spend more time reflecting on spirituality within the IHM tradition?

This process of exploration into spirituality is unfolding and evolving. We welcome your ideas, suggestions, and feedback on the process. Please contact the members of the Direction on Spirituality Committee using the information on pages 11-12.

For help on the process, please see page 11-13.

For online resources, go to “Highlights/Exploration into Spirituality” on the private side of the IHM website.

Heartfelt Thanks

The Direction on Spirituality Committee would like to thank the IHM community for entrusting us with this process and for entering in with an open heart. We also thank Molly Hunt for editing and website work; Gloria Rivera, IHM, and Helga Leija for translation; Candyce Rekart, IHM, for consultation; Lynne Moldenhauer, IHM, and Rob Carroll for music; Mary Finlayson, RSCJ, for interpretation during meetings; Mary Downey, IHM, Kathleen Tkach, IHM Associate, Chris Slat and all who had a hand in helping launch this first movement of our Exploration into Spirituality.



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