

# Sandra Poupart Valentin

God chose me and sent me to the arms of my parents, Domitila Valentin and Merin Poupart. I was born and raised in Ceiba, Puerto Rico and grew up in a big family (seven children) filled with lots of love, traditions and play. In my early years, my family went to a Pentecostal church. Later on, we stopped going, but the love for God stayed with us.



It was a time to assume my strengths and weaknesses, a time to see my lights and shadows. I had the opportunity to participate in intercongregational groups and to live in Honduras for three months, sharing in mission with the IHM Sisters who lived there; it marked my life.

I started participating in the Catholic Church when I was 15. Janet Hill, IHM, prepared me for baptism, First Communion and confirmation. In this process, I met Lisandra Pedraza Burgos, who already had a relationship with the IHM Sisters. I started participating in the ministry of the youth and, little by little, I became in love with the spirituality, love for the poor and hospitality of the Sisters IHM.

When I started my studies at the university, my family migrated to the United States. I felt that my place was in Puerto Rico and stayed to finish my bachelor's degree in elementary education with a concentration in special education. I also completed a master's degree in primary education and worked six years with children with special needs. After that, I worked with children in the regular program.



When I visited Monroe for the first time, I was touched by the hospitality and generosity of the sisters. Their energy filled my heart, in ways that inspired me to continue walking in my call to serve God and the neediest.

I made my first vows in Loíza and final vows in Monroe when the congregation celebrated 50 years of the overseas missions. My faith and love for God grew in my life. This love shaped and transformed me. It still calls me to convert my heart and be the best person I can be. It still calls me to serve the poorest and to learn from people on my journey, especially the children I have served.

I continued my relationship with the IHM Sisters. One day, God disrupted my life and I knocked at the doors of the community: "Sisters, I want to join you." My family supported my decision and gave me their blessing.



I am grateful to the community for walking with me, for offering me their support and commitment, for taking me in their arms when I could not walk, for their faithful respect.

I completed my candidacy in Loíza, PR, with Sisters Janet, Lisandra, Juanita Bernard and Candyce Rekart. I also shared with IHMs Carolina Diez de Andino, Teresita Nazario and Carmen Rosado (who died in 1997); each of them contributed something important.

I thank God for each of them who made my ministry in education one filled with love, compassion, solidarity, and gratitude.