

“Every moment of one’s life creates a field of endless opportunities.”

- Anonymous

Exploration of life for Sister Marie Gatzka began in her family home in Flint, Mich., where she saw basic Catholic values modeled by her parents and where she was shaped by the enlivening and carefree interchanges she enjoyed as eldest of her 11 siblings.

Marie’s spiritual nurturing, initiated by loving parents, was continued by IHM Sisters at St. Michael School, which Marie attended through the 11th grade.

Then at the invitation of her sister-teachers and with her parents’ approval, Marie entered the front doors of the Motherhouse in June 1940. She finished her senior year at St. Mary Academy as a postulant.

“Two of my brothers were born after I left home,” Marie stated. “How I looked forward to visits from the family that I missed so much! Visiting days were special for me, but I suspect that my younger brothers and sisters sensed it as an opportunity to break away and run down one of the long corridors and play at the pond!”

Sister Marie’s first 17 years of ministry were in schools: in Michigan, teaching at St. Mary, Monroe; St. Mary, Marshall; at the Monroe Campus of Marygrove College; and St. Francis de Sales, Detroit. She was principal at St. John, Benton Harbor and also at Immaculate Heart of Mary High School in Westchester, Ill.

In 1966, together with Sister Margaret Brennan, she was elected to the General Council of the IHM congregation. “I was exhilarated by the trust and confidence placed in me,” she said, “and caught up in Margaret’s enthusiasm and efforts to bring the Documents of Vatican II to the community.”



Marie served in many capacities, including secretary of the Marygrove board, Formation coordinator and vice-president during the 10 years Sister Margaret served as general superior and then president.

Following her time in office, Sister Marie completed a year’s study in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and became a certified chaplain. She served at Providence

Hospital in Southfield, Mich., for 15 years, first as chaplain, then as director of the Pastoral Care Department.

“Experiencing ‘community’ with the

women religious, priests and lay members of the department as we ministered to the patients and staff was enriching to a high degree,” Marie recalled. “We worked, played, laughed, cried, prayed and celebrated wonderfully together!”



A few years later, Sister Marie established a Pastoral Care Department at the IHM Motherhouse for sisters and staff.

Now, at Jubilee time, Marie recalls the daunting, yet exciting, times of growth and change; the travel and events that introduced her to different cultures; and the rich relationships with people who were innovators in their thoughts and actions.

“So very glad that I said ‘Yes’ to a call to ministry as an IHM Sister!” she mused.



Marie Gatzka