

Christine Gellings, born June 20, 1942, grew up in Flint, Mich., the eldest child of Christine and John Gellings (both of German descent). The family included Chris' five brothers and two sisters. Chris attended St. John Grade School in Davison and St. Michael High School in Flint. The opportunity to attend daily Eucharist led her toward a deep, personal relationship with Jesus. The vibrancy and life of the sisters who demonstrated their personal relationship with God called Chris to explore religious life in Monroe.



She was later invited to found and direct Avila Retreat Center in Durham, N.C., in a former Carmelite monastery. Avila Center (the only Catholic retreat center in the diocese) and Chris were deeply loved by people of all faiths who attended. Chris lived

through the history-making Raleigh Diocese at a time when she knew Bishop Gossman as "your brother, Joe."

Chris entered the IHM community on Sept. 6, 1960. Surprisingly, she did not find the transition to the community difficult. She liked learning; the regular rhythm of prayer; and many new relationships. She thrived on Sister Margaret Brennan's teaching of theology and Scripture and the introduction to prayer as relationship that has sustained her.



Chris, in 1989, sought to study clinical social work at UNC, recognizing that people seeking spiritual direction needed greater understanding of the childhood dynamics still affecting their lives. For the past 30 years, Chris, with a master's degree in social work and certification in spiritual direction, has maintained a private dual practice of spiritual direction and psychotherapy. She is also called upon for retreat ministry and supervision of other spiritual directors of various faiths.

Difficulty came for Chris when six of her closest friends left the community. After this, Chris, grieving, went to Margaret and said "I want to do something to deepen my relationship with God. I shared a lot with these women." Margaret invited her to make the Ignatian 30-day retreat, a retreat she has since directed many times.

Chris states that her "ministries flowed naturally from one into another, always believing God is with me in whatever I am called to be and do. Knowing the power of the liberating mission of Jesus in my own life and in the lives of those I serve in therapy and spiritual direction has been my greatest joy."

Chris' early ministry was as a teacher in Monroe, Battle Creek and in Atlanta before becoming community vocation director. Then in 1976, she along with IHM Sisters Jane Paris and Helen "Happy" Shondell, were invited to Greenville, N.C., and the Diocese of Raleigh to join a pastoral team with two priests serving two parishes as well as campus ministry at East Carolina University. Their work was ecumenical.



Thus began Chris' 45 years in the missionary diocese of Raleigh.

Chris is deeply grateful to the community for her education; for rich opportunities through various ministries; expanding her horizons through the community's commitment to social justice; and its depth of spirituality.

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