

A series of unusual events the summer following high school graduation prompted Sister Ann Gabriel Kilsdonk to apply to Marygrove College in August, which put her on the path to becoming an IHM.

She grew up with four siblings in a home facing the Redford Golf Course, attended public school until she joined her older sister riding the Grand River street car to St. Theresa for eighth grade and high school. Her parents insisted she attend college; she chose home economics as her major

At Marygrove, she sensed the spirituality of the IHMs and saw religious life as a way to grow closer to God. She entered the community after she graduated.

Her first mission was teaching second and third grades at St. John in Monroe, followed by teaching home economics, science, art, biology and Christian family living “for eight wonderful years” at Immaculata High School. She began a master’s program at Columbia University and transferred to Michigan State University, where she completed her degree in clothing, textiles and related arts. After Immaculata, she taught at St. Mary, Akron, Ohio, for two years and managed the cafeteria.

She was missioned to Marygrove, where she taught full time for 40 years and as an adjunct for five more. Her teaching areas were clothing, textiles, interior design and home ec teacher formation. Later, they included family resource management and fashion merchandising. She encouraged her students’ professional development through the departmental club and attendance at professional meetings and was involved in various professional organizations, including the American and Michigan Home Economics Associations. She served on boards; was secretary of the MHEA; newsletter editor of the Michigan Council of Family Relations; a Michigan delegate to AHEA; and gave presentations at national meetings.



A change of department name to Human Ecology led to using a sabbatical year pursuing a doctorate in family ecology at Michigan State University. Michigan State published a chapter from her dissertation as a monograph; it was also published in Japanese. She became head of Marygrove’s Human Ecology (HEC) Department and chair of the

Professional Studies Division.

She participated in the Marygrove Wings of Wisdom program, spending three months in Europe studying the fashion and textile industries. Sister Ann Gabriel is proud of her AHEA Ellen H. Richards Fellowship award and MHEA scholarships, which helped finance her doctoral studies; her Distinguished Alumnae awards from Marygrove and Michigan State; and her Outstanding Professional award from MHEA.



She served as textile analyst for the Detroit Dry Cleaning Institute and worked with the Detroit Public Schools’ Family and Consumer Sciences Unit to align its curriculum with national and state standards.

When Marygrove’s HEC unit closed, she raised money for scholarships by disposing of its equipment.

Sister Ann Gabriel especially enjoyed working with students as they developed their ideals and talents and feels blessed to have served at Marygrove for so many years. She is grateful for the support, friendships and spirituality she received from and shared with the IHM community and Marygrove faculty.

Ann Gabriel Kilsdonk