

# Josephine McNamara

*“The support of the people with whom I ministered has always been God’s gift.”*

Sister Josephine McNamara grew up in Chicago, the second oldest of four girls. She first heard the call to follow Jesus – to care for others especially the poor and marginalized – when she was in the eighth grade at St. Anne School; a Maryknoll priest’s presentation about Maryknoll’s missions inspired her.

She had become acquainted with the IHMs when her older sister, Antoinette, entered the community; it was the simplicity of life, commitment to prayer and community life of the IHMs that was most appealing. With the support of her parents, she joined the community after she graduated from high school.

During her novitiate, a bishop from Puerto Rico visited the Motherhouse and spoke of a need for sisters to minister as teachers in Puerto Rico. Once Sister Jo was professed, she volunteered to teach in Puerto Rico, where she stayed for 12 years.

She saw the need to minister to adults if they were going to help the children, so when she returned to Michigan, she ministered with adults from the Hispanic community at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Pontiac. There, she served in outreach, formation of men becoming permanent deacons and assisting in forming small communities of faith.



Sister Jo then joined the pastoral team at St. Gerard Parish in Detroit, ministering in Christian service, the formation of block clubs, the religious education program and conducting evenings and days of prayer. After 12 years, she became pastoral associate at St. Michael in Grand Ledge, Mich. This was followed by 18 years as pastoral coordinator at Good Shepherd Parish in Montrose, Mich., where she was acting pastor except for

celebrating liturgy as president.

Her style of leadership was partnering with parishioners, focusing on developing lay people

to serve as leaders within the Church. “God has blessed me in so many ways,” Sister Jo notes. “Every place where I served was very fulfilling and the people were very supportive.”



In “retirement,” Sister Jo ministered at River House – IHM Spirituality Center in hospitality and outreach. She also ministered in IHM Senior Living Community with her therapy dog. She has had three very special golden retrievers: Tobias, Sparkle and Nicholas. All three gave

unconditional love and joy and helped bring healing to the sick and elderly.

Sister Jo’s most enjoyable time was as pastoral coordinator in Montrose, especially, “being able to minister within the parish and encouraging lay leadership, because I really feel that is what Church is.” She enjoyed being a part of the parish family. Sister Jo is grateful to the IHM community for giving her the freedom to minister where God called. She is also “so grateful to God that I have been able to minister and fulfill the desire I had to serve the people of God.”

