

Judith O'Brien

I am the second of three daughters born to Jack and Corinne O'Brien. I was the "middle," with my sister, Mary Kay 18 months older and my sister, Nancy eight years younger. It was Nancy who charted the path to a love for teaching and cherishing young children. I loved each of her growing up steps. In time, babysitting, helping with after-school religion classes and working as a camp counselor, teaching crafts, archery and swimming placed me with young children, who formed a place in my heart.

The IHM Sisters teaching at both Gesu and Immaculata were kind, prayerful and competent. They inspired me to "go and do likewise." I entered the IHM community at age 17, following high school graduation from Immaculata.

The multitude of white-veiled novices, the singing of chant filling the Chapel was nothing like the parish experience of Gesu (even with five often-active altars). Monroe was another world, opening fresh insights through community life, classes, books and prayer life.



The five years in Monroe prepared me to teach under the wings of Sister Marie Winifred. Vatican II opened new doors to faith formation and Sister Mary Jo Maher saw a future in new geographic sites. After 10 years in five different parish schools teaching primary grades, new doors opened on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana.

The seven years there opened me to new cultures. My landlord was a shepherd caring for more than 200 sheep, planting Psalm 23 in a lived experience amid a Native American culture.

When Montana doors closed, the doors opened in the Thumb of Michigan within the rural parish of St. Mary/St. Edward in Kinde. Twenty-eight years passed quickly living in the parish rectory and serving as pastoral associate and director of religious education. In the midst of these years, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd opened my eyes and heart to fresh, new horizons of faith formation on all levels.



Presently, the doors of St. Charles in Detroit have opened for me. Within this city culture, I find fresh insight into the incredible history of our community in the faith life of the city. The past and present ministry and prayer of our sisters looms large of seeds planted and being planted, filling me with gratitude each day.

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